

# **Talent management in South African universities: Management and recruits' expectations and perceptions**

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for the degree *Magister Commercii* in Human Resource  
Management at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West  
University

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## **DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY OF RESEARCH**

I, Heila Liversage, hereby declare that **Talent management in South African universities: Management and recruits' expectations and perceptions** are my own work and that the views and opinions expressed in this study are those of the author and taken from relevant literature references as shown in the references.

I further declare that the content of this research will not be handed in for any other qualification at any other tertiary institution.



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**Heila Liversage**

**December 2015**

## COMMENTS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The present research study followed the formatting guidelines specified by the postgraduate programme in Human Resource Management of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. The format of the research articles is in accordance with the guidelines for authors for the South African Journal of Industrial Psychology (SAJIP). The referencing style of this study followed the guidelines as prescribed in the Publication Manual (6th ed.) of the American Psychological Association (APA).
- The researcher chose to undertake the research in an article format.
- The research study is submitted in the form of four chapters, which include an introductory chapter, two research articles and a concluding chapter.
- The research proposal was submitted to the North West University of Potchefstroom's Ethical committee, and ethical clearance was received before the study was conducted.

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10 May 2016

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Dear Ms Liversage

## ETHICAL CLEARANCE

This letter serves to confirm that the research project of Heila Liversage, with the title “**Talent management in South African universities: Management and recruits' expectations and perceptions**” has undergone ethical review. The proposal was presented at a Faculty Research Meeting and accepted. This acceptance deems the proposed research as being of minimal risk, granted that all requirements of anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent are met. This letter should form part of your dissertation manuscript submitted for examination purposes.

Yours sincerely

Louise Jansen van Rensburg  
Senior Administrative Assistant

## DECLARATION FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

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9 December 2015

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I hereby confirm that the Master's dissertation by Ms Heila Liversage, *Talent management in South African universities: Management and recruits' expectations and perceptions*, was edited and groomed to the best of my ability within the available timeframe; this included recommendations to improve the language and logical structure and stylistic suggestions to enhance the presentation.

Rev Claude Vosloo  
Language and knowledge practitioner and consultant

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*Don't think outside the box, reinvent the box*

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## SUMMARY

**Title:** Talent management in South African universities: Management and recruits' expectations and perceptions

**Keywords:** Talent management, talent recruits, universities, policies and procedures, needs, expectations, perception.

The universities of South Africa are confronted with a changing workforce. The so-called 'Baby Boomers' are soon to be retired from the universities and there is not sufficient time to develop talent to fill the gap. Therefore, a majority of the skills, knowledge, and experience may be lost when the 'Boomers' exit the university environment. Additionally, employees may resign for other reasons such as when their needs and expectations are not met. If universities wish to remain, or develop into outstanding institutes of learning, management need to invest in their talented employees. Such employees are validated as the individuals who will lead universities into the future through their performance, skills, and knowledge.

If universities want to create and sustain a talented workforce, they should also invest in their talent management programme, which includes the applicable strategies, policies and procedures. Talented employees (i.e. talent recruits) are much sought after and have the luxury to choose at which organisation they want to pursue their careers. Previous findings show that globally universities have not implemented a comprehensive talent management programme. Therefore it stands to reason that some of these shortcomings in talent management may also hamper universities in South Africa.

Moreover, viewed from the other perspective, it is still unclear what talented employees need and expect from their universities. If the talent management champions were cognisant of talented employees' needs and expectations, then they would be able to design, develop and execute effective talent management programmes to support the talent recruits, an intervention that could lead to higher engagement and retention levels.

The aim of the present study was to investigate the status quo of talent management in South African universities as viewed from the perspectives of both management and recruits. The study worked from an interpretative paradigm to explore the expectations and perceptions of

management and recruits within the selected South African universities. Therefore the subjective experiences of individuals were investigated by means of a qualitative phenomenological approach in order to achieve the objectives of the present study. For the purpose of this research two articles were utilised. A multiple case study strategy was followed in both articles. Three universities of South Africa ( $N = 3$ ) were involved in the research study.

Article 1 discusses the research method of purposive convenience sampling that was employed. The participants included the staff members primarily responsible for driving talent management within their specific university ( $n = 3$ ). The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and a document analysis. Such an analysis was followed to investigate the different policies and procedures for talent management in South African universities in order to understand how talent recruits are managed. The aim also was to determine whether talent was managed as the universities intended. The data obtained from the interviews, policies and procedures were examined closely by means of a content analysis.

Article 2 reports the snowball convenience sampling that was utilised for the purpose of the present research study. The participants consisted of the employees who were identified as talent by their university ( $n = 31$ ). For the second article the data was also obtained through semi-structured interviews. These interviews were analysed by means of a thematic content analysis.

For Article 1 the findings indicated that the participating universities have not implemented formal talent management policies and procedures. In some instances, limited strategies, policies and procedures were in place to support the talent management programmes.

In Article 2, it was evident from the results of the research study that talent recruits have various needs and expectations from their universities' talent management programme. Different themes were extracted to indicate these motivators regarding their universities. These themes cover the full talent management spectrum and range from needs for resources, job information and assistance, incentives, challenges, opportunities for self-development, to various work-related benefits.

Finally, recommendations were made for future research and the contributions of the present study to the Human Resources practice. It was recommended that universities review their talent management programmes, and furthermore that these programmes are designed to align with the needs and expectations of talented employees.

## OPSOMMING

**Titel:** Talentbestuur binne Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite: Bestuur en talent rekrute se verwagtings en persepsies.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Talentbestuur, talent rekrute, universiteite, beleide en prosedures, behoeftes, verwagtings, persepsie.

Die universiteite in Suid-Afrika het te kampe met 'n veranderende arbeidsmag. Die sogenaamde *Baby Boomers* is op die punt om by universiteite af te tree en daar is nie genoeg tyd om talent te ontwikkel om die leemte te vul nie. Gevolglik kan die meerderheid vaardighede, kennis en ervaring verlore gaan wanneer die *Boomers* die universiteit verlaat. Daarbenewens kan werknemers ook om ander redes bedank, soos wanneer daar nie aan hulle behoeftes en verwagtings voldoen word nie. Indien universiteite graag uitstaande leerinstellings wil bly of daarin ontwikkel, moet die bestuur in die talentvolle werknemers belê. Hierdie werknemers word aangeskryf as daardie individue wat universiteite die toekoms sal inneem deur hulle prestasie, vaardighede en kennis.

Indien universiteite 'n talentvolle arbeidsmag vir skep en daarmee volhou, moet hulle ook in hulle talentbestuursprogram belê, insluitend die toepaslike strategieë, beleide en prosedures. Talentvolle werknemers (d.i. talent rekrute) is gesog en het die voordeel dat hulle kan kies by watter onderneming hulle loopbaan wil voortsit. Vorige bevindings dui aan dat universiteite wêreldwyd nie 'n omvattende talentbestuursprogram ingestel het nie. Daarom is dit te verwag dat sommige van hierdie tekortkomings in talentbestuur ook universiteite in Suid-Afrika kan belemmer.

Tewens, van die ander perspektief beskou, is dit steeds onduidelik wat talent rekrute van hulle universiteite benodig en verwag. Indien die talent bestuur kampioene bewus was van die talentvolle werknemers se behoeftes en verwagtings, sou hulle in staat wees om doeltreffende talentbestuursprogramme te ontwerp, ontwikkel en uit te voer om die talent rekrute te ondersteun – 'n ingryping wat kan lei tot hoër vlakke van betrokkenheid en werkretensie.

Die doel van die huidige studie was om die stand van sake rakende talentbestuur in Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite te ondersoek soos beskou uit die perspektiewe van beide die bestuur en die talent. Die studie het gewerk vanaf die interpretatiewe paradigma om die verwagtings en persepsies van die bestuur en aanwinste binne geselekteerde Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite te verken. Gevolglik is gefokus op individue se ervarings met behulp van 'n kwalitatiewe fenomenologiese benadering om sodoende die doelwitte van die huidige studie te bereik. Vir die doel van die huidige studie is twee artikels ingespan. In beide artikels is 'n veelvoudige gevallestudiestrategie gevolg. Drie universiteite van Suid-Afrika ( $N = 3$ ) het aan die navorsingstudie deelgeneem.

Artikel 1 bespreek die navorsingsmetode van 'n doelbewuste, gerieflikheidsteekproef wat gebruik is. Die deelnemers was die personele wat hoofsaaklik verantwoordelik is om die talentbestuursprogram binne die spesifieke universiteit te bestuur ( $n = 3$ ). Die data is deur semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude en 'n dokumentanalise ingesamel. Hierdie analise is gevolg om die onderskeie beleide en prosedures vir talentbestuur binne Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite te ondersoek en daardeur 'n begrip te kry van hoe talent rekrute bestuur word. Die doel was daarby om vas te stel of die talent wel bestuur is soos die universiteite bedoel het. Die data van die onderhoude verkry, asook die beleide en prosedures is deeglik ontleed deur 'n inhoudsanalise.

Artikel 2 handel oor die sneeubal-gerieflikheidsteekproef wat vir die doel van die studie ingespan is. Die deelnemers was daardie werknemers wat deur hulle universiteite as talent uitgewys is ( $n = 31$ ). Vir hierdie tweede artikel is die data ook verkry deur semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude. Hierdie onderhoude is ontleed deur 'n tematiese inhoudsanalise.

By Artikel 1 het die bevindings aangetoon dat die deelnemende universiteite nie formeel talentbestuursbeleide en -prosedures geïmplementeer het nie. In sommige gevalle was daar wel beperkte strategieë, beleide en prosedures in plek om die talentbestuursprogramme te ondersteun.

In Artikel 2 blyk dit duidelik uit die resultate van die navorsingstudie dat die talent rekrute uiteenlopende behoeftes en verwagtings koester jeens hulle universiteite se talentbestuursprogramme. Verskillende temas is onttrek om hierdie dryfvere teenoor hulle universiteite aan te dui. Hierdie temas dek die volle spektrum van talentbestuur en strek van

behoefte aan hulpbronne, werkinligting en -bystand, aansporings, uitdagings, geleenthede vir self-ontwikkeling, tot 'n reeks werkverwante voordele.

Laastens is aanbevelings gemaak vir toekomstige navorsing en oor die bydrae wat die huidige studie tot die Menslike-hulpbronpraktyk lewer. Daar is aanbeveel dat universiteite hulle talentbestuursprogramme hersien, en dat hierdie programme voorts ontwerp word sodat dit in ooreenstemming met die behoeftes en verwagtings van talentvolle individue is.

# CHAPTER 1

## **Introduction**

The present research study focused on the current status of talent management in South African universities from the perspective of both talent management champions and talent recruits. This chapter deals with the problem statement and the research objectives in terms of both general and specific objectives. Furthermore, the research design is explained and the divisions of the chapters given.

### **1.1 Problem statement**

The ideal of a ‘talented workforce’ is continuously becoming more intricate but also more critical than before (Sheokand & Verma, 2015). In order to compete and survive in the competitive marketplace, organisations therefore depend on a type of talent programme to identify, attract, develop, engage and retain its talented employees (Tiwari, 2015; Waheed, Zaim & Zaim, 2012). If an organisation wishes to survive, management must rethink their management of talented employees (Ready & Conger, 2007; Tarique & Schuler, 2010). This view is in accordance with research that has emphasised the chronic shortage of talented people globally (Al Mutairi Alya & Zainal, 2013; Sheokand & Verma, 2015).

The shortage of talented employees in the tertiary education sector is exacerbated by an aging generation of talent. In addition, universities are facing increasing challenges related to post, current and future retirements (Govender, 2014). There is also a noted concern about the future supply of talented academics due to more lucrative service offerings in the public and private sectors (Samuel & Chipunza, 2013).

The impact of ‘talent loss’ has a far-reaching effect on organisations. Initial research by Bernthal and Wellings (2001) indicate that the cost of talent turnover and replacement of talent in organisations can comprise 29% to 46% of an employee’s annual salary. More recent research indicated that the replacement of a talented employee can sometimes exceed 100% of his/her annual salary (Bryant & Allen, 2013; Porter, 2011). Despite the astronomical costs involved, universities also function in competitive environments just like other organisations and therefore they also need talented employees to succeed, survive and show sustainability (Pienaar & Bester, 2008).

The replacement of talented employees is therefore imperative to assure long-term competitiveness for these institutions. Therefore effective management of talent should be at the top of any university agenda. Van der Brink, Fruytier and Theunissen (2013) confirm that talent management is one of the key strategic human resource issues for universities globally. Although research places strong emphasis on the importance of talent and talent management, it is important for the present study to have a clear definition of the terms *talent* and *talent management*.

Al Mutairi Alya and Zainal (2013) define talent as the total of an individual's inherent ability, gifts skills, knowledge, experiences, character, attitude, and drive. According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2007), talent consist of those individuals who can make a difference to the organisations' performance through their contributions, and sacrifices, or through input that signifies the highest level of their potential. The concept of 'talent' in the workplace can furthermore be defined as the assets of an employee who has the ability and motivation to rise and succeed in higher senior positions within the organisation (Corporate Leadership Council, 2005).

For the purpose of the present research study, individuals who are seen as talented employees, 'high-flyers', 'rising stars' or employees with potential are referred to as *talent recruits*.

In an attempt to manage talent recruits, a programme can be deployed that is typically referred to as talent management. Talent management entails not only a programme but also a process, through which organisations identify, attract and recruit, develop, engage and retains their talent recruits (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Shukla, 2009). These terms are broadly defined below.

- *Talent identification* entails the process of determining which individuals form part of the talent pool (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).
- *Attracting and recruiting talent* implies the analysing, aligning and matching talented of employees with the applicable roles, goals, strategies and culture of the organisation (Phillips & Gully, 2015).

- *Talent development* refers to the organisation's focus on planning, selecting and implementing development strategies to recruit talent in the organisation. Talent development will enhance the recruits' skills, knowledge and abilities to show outstanding performances in their daily occupation (McCauley & McCall Jr, 2014). Talent development is done in order to assure the future supply of talent. In addition, such development keeps the focus on strategic objectives and activities that align with the talent management process, which includes engagement and retention (Garavan, Carbery & Rock, 2012).
- *Talent engagement* refers to the organisation's focus to manage talent recruits in such a way that they show positive behaviour as corporate citizens and are willing to surpass their colleagues in productivity (Rani & Reddy, 2015).
- *Retention* can be explained as interventions companies use to prevent talent recruits from leaving and to encourage them to remain within the organisation (Naim, 2014). Engaging and retaining talent is especially important since organisations have a continuous need for a high percentage of remaining employees and a low turnover level (Phillips & Edwards, 2008).

It is worth noting that employees rely on organisations to meet their daily needs and to optimise their sense of self-worth. In return, organisations primarily depend on the effectiveness and success of their talent recruits which help them compete with other organisations (Al Mutairi Alya & Zainal, 2013). Therefore, talent management in essence can be seen as the process whereby future human capital needs can be anticipated, as well as the manner in which the organisation plans to meet those determined needs (McKinsey & Company, 2012).

Based on previous research it is evident that the recruiting and managing of talent may contribute to excellence within universities. However, only a limited number of universities have implemented formal programmes to support and promote existing talent (Lynch, 2007). This stresses the importance of a programme for talent management since such a process will not only create a competitive advantage but also meet or even exceed customers' expectations (Taneja, Sewell & Odom, 2015). The problem is that universities are first to pride themselves on continuous learning and advanced thinking, yet these institutions do not place as much emphasis on talent management, and furthermore invest insufficient time and effort to identify future leaders (Riccio, 2010). According to Clunies (2007) over the past few

years universities have shown to be slow in accepting and adapting to numerous corporate management processes, including the one for talent management. This was confirmed by various other researchers (Barkhuizen, Mogwere & Schutte, 2014a; Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011; Theron, Barkhuizen & Du Plessis, 2014).

Heuer (2003) undertook a study among seven Ivy-plus institutions. The findings showed that policies and procedures were initiated for talent management but were not in place at the time when the research were conducted. Some reasons pointed out for the lack of active policies and procedures included the following (Govaerts, Kyndt, Dochy & Baert, 2011; Heuer, 2003; Van der Brink *et al.*, 2013):

1. Scepticism toward the programme;
2. management resorting to old methods;
3. most faculties being unfamiliar with the concept talent management;
4. organisational culture did not make it a priority;
5. a lack of business discipline; and
6. no support from the leadership team.

Lynch expresses the dilemma as follows: “There appears to be a mounting trend that has many companies advocating the worth of talent development within higher education institutions, while the institution themselves dismiss the notion” (Lynch, 2007, p2). It seems that universities are faced with various challenges but the major challenge is the timely identification of the right talent recruits’ that have the right skill or potential for the specific job at the right time – as is the case in various organisations (Deloitte, 2010; Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod, 2001). A clear reason why universities fail to identify the correct talent ‘package’ timely is because programmes for talent management are not incorporated into the long-term strategic goals of the organisation (Groysberg & Bell, 2013).

Baron and Armstrong (2007) emphasise the need for a policy and procedure to manage talent recruits, particularly through developing their potential and encouraging their passion. Such policies and procedure ensures that the organisation identifies and retains the needed talent (Armstrong, 2009). Heuer (2003) posits that universities are not used to developing talent and only focuses on daily tasks and crisis management (Higher Education South Africa (HESA), 2011). Younger, Smallwood and Ulrich (2007) suggest that the talent management approach

should focus on growth from within the organisation. Furthermore, he proposes that the development of talent recruits should be a key element of the business policy and that clear competencies and qualities should be well defined according to career paths. Younger *et al.* (2007) pointed out that, by placing a high premium on management, development, coaching and mentoring, organisations can ensure improved performances.

To conclude, universities fulfil a crucial role in society since it function as reservoirs of knowledge which are used to foster the needs of human resources and to satisfy the aspirations of people to build a prosperous and humane society (Samuel & Chipunza, 2013). It seems as if universities succeed in developing their students but fall short in implementing programmes to manage talent (Riccio, 2010; Van der Brink *et al.*, 2013). This dilemma may also be the case in South African universities. Virtually no research has been done to set a benchmark for policies and practices that manage talent in South African Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), but various researchers have indicated that policies and procedures to deal with talent were applied poorly (Barkhuizen *et al.*, 2014; HESA, 2011; Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011; Theron *et al.*, 2014).

For universities to stay globally competitive such institutions need a benchmark that allows them to identify, attract talent recruits efficiently and to develop, engage and retain these individuals. Furthermore, is it necessary that universities understand the needs and expectations of talent recruits. Naturally, it can be assumed that, if policies and procedures for talent management are designed in such a way to fulfil the needs and expectations of talent recruits, they will be more engaged and will most probably be retained within the institution.

For an adequate reflection of the current status quo of talent management within the universities in South Africa, the present study employed the interpretative paradigm. This paradigm relies on the subjective view of the participants (Creswell, 2003). The aim of the study was to understand the expectations and perceptions of both management and talent recruits regarding the current talent management programmes within the institutions they are part of.

Therefore, the purpose of the present research study was to investigate the current state of talent management in selected universities in South Africa, and furthermore to define the

needs and expectations talent recruits have with regard to their universities. In order to reach this purpose, the study explored the following eleven research questions:

- How are talent management conceptualised in the literature?
- Do South African universities have formal talent management procedures, policies or programmes in place?
- Who are the individuals chosen by universities to champion their respective talent management processes?
- Which policies and procedures were implemented in South African universities to identify, attract and recruit, develop, engage and retain talent
- How do South African universities monitor the talent management process?
- Do South African universities consider their talent management as successful?
- What are the challenges experienced by South African universities in managing their talent?
- Are talent recruits aware that they are being identified as talented individuals and what are their opinions on the identification of talent?
- What are the recruits' needs and expectations of talent management programmes in South African universities?
- What are the implications if talent recruits' needs and expectations are not met?
- What recommendations can be based on the findings of this research?

## 1.2 Expected contribution of this study

The present research study made contributions in various areas as explicated briefly below.

### **1.2.1 Contributions to the individual**

The study made all talent recruits in universities more aware of the policies and procedures of talent management in South African universities. Individuals gained a better understanding of how such an institution identifies, attracts and recruits their talent in order to develop, involve them in university programmes and retain them as human capital. Talent recruits are made also made aware of what to expect from their universities and can measure their needs and expectations against an established benchmark.

### **1.2.2 Contribution to the organisation**

Talent management is a crucial operation for universities. The present study helped to develop a benchmark for the talent management policies and procedures, for universities to compare them with other similar institutions and assess whether they comply with the norm. Through such a benchmark, universities are informed about the talent recruits' needs and expectations regarding such tertiary institutions in South Africa. Therefore universities in South Africa are able to fulfil these needs and expectations by implementing a proper and well-defined talent management programme.

### **1.2.3 Contributions to the literature on Human Resource Management**

Limited research has been done within universities on the matter of talent management, especially in the South African context. The present study adds to the body of knowledge on talent management programmes in South African universities. Further knowledge was gained about the needs and expectations of talent recruits from the field of the research. The research enables researchers in the field of talent management to explore this topic further and to establish whether the research findings do impact positively on universities.

## **1.3 Research objectives**

The research objectives are divided into general objectives with specific objectives. These objectives are explicated in a form of two articles that structures the study.

### **1.3.1 General objectives**

The articles in this research study present and discuss the general objectives as set out below.

#### **Article 1**

The general objective of Article 1 was to explore how South African universities implement and manage policies and procedures to identify, attract and recruit, develop, engage and retain talent.

## **Article 2**

The primary objective of Article 2 was to examine the talent recruits' needs and expectations of talent management programmes in South African universities.

### **1.3.2 Specific objectives**

The following articles in the present study present and discuss the specific objectives as set out below.

#### **Article 1**

In Article 1 the focus of the discussion is on the following specific objectives:

- To explore how policies and procedures for talent management were conceptualised in the literature.
- To determine whether South African universities have formal talent management procedures, policies or programmes in place.
- To identify the individuals chosen by universities to champion their respective talent management processes.
- To explore which policies and procedures were implemented in South African universities to identify, attract and recruit, develop, engage and retain talent.
- To examine how South African universities monitor the talent management process.
- To determine whether South African universities consider their talent management as successful.
- To identify the challenges experienced by South African universities in managing their talent.
- To formulate recommendations based on the findings of this research.

#### **Article 2**

Article 2 focused on the discussion of the following specific objectives:

- To determine whether talent recruits are aware of being identified as talented individuals and to explore their opinions on the identification of talent.
- To identify the recruits' needs and expectations of talent management programmes in South African universities.
- To explore the implications if talent recruits' needs and expectations are not met.
- To formulate recommendations based on the findings of this research.

## 1.4 Research design

The research design that was followed for the present study included the research approach, research strategy and research method.

### **1.4.1 Research approach**

A qualitative research approach was followed in both articles of this study. A study with a qualitative nature creates new concepts and theories by merging empirical evidence and abstract concepts (Kreuger & Neuman, 2005). The present research was an explorative study due to the limited knowledge about talent management in the universities of South Africa. Exploratory research is conducted in such a way that insight can be gained from a phenomenon, situation, community, or individual (Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012).

The present research was conducted within an interpretative paradigm. Interpretivism aims to find new underlying meanings and interpretations in the ontological assumption made up of the phenomena, that are perceived in terms of time and context of various realities (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1999). In accordance, the present research study aimed to reflect the subjective experience of the participants' views of the phenomena, namely talent and talent management within universities in the South African context.

### **1.4.2 Research strategy**

This study employed a case study strategy to describe the relationship between research and theory. Creswell (2007) explains that a case study involves an investigation of a restricted system as well as a single source, or multiple sources, of information. By using a descriptive case study, the phenomenon is described, analysed and interpreted in order to test the theory (Yin, 2003). For the purpose of the present research a multiple case study was used, by including three South African universities were included in this study (Creswell, 2007).

The participants included in this study were selected from South African universities, where the management indicated that they currently are using talent management programmes. The sample of participants consisted of, on the one hand, talent management champions and, on the other hand, talent recruits. The participants identified in Article 1 as talent management champions', were individuals who in particular were responsible for driving the talent management programme in their specific universities. Article 2 includes the 'talent recruits' as individuals who were identified as talented employees, people with potential, the so-called 'high flyers' or 'rising stars' within their university environment.

### **1.4.3 Research method**

The research method consisted of the literature review, research setting and entrée. The focus was also to establish researcher roles, sampling, as well as the research procedure and data-collection methods. Furthermore, the method entails recording of the data as and strategies employed to ensure data quality and integrity. The section on the method also considered ethical considerations, the data analysis, and reporting style.

#### **1.4.3.1 Literature review**

A comprehensive literature review was undertaken on talent management. The review included the following constructs or concepts: talent management, talent, policies, universities, and recruits. Relevant articles were consulted through the following databases; APA PsycArticles, EbscoHost, Emerald, Google Scholar, Jstor, SabinetOnline, SACat, SAEpublications, Science Direct, ProQuest and Nexus. A wide range of journals were consulted on the topic and related fields of research. Popular media were used and include

newspaper articles and magazines on Human Resources. In addition, internet forums and websites were reviewed for recent and up to date information.

#### **1.4.3.2 Research setting**

Participants were interviewed in their offices) for convenience and safety. Arrangements were made beforehand with the specific individuals at each of the different universities to ensure that the interview is convenient for the participants. The interviewer ensured that the interview was semi-structured in order to encourage involvement and interaction (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2011). Furthermore, the interviewer ensured that the environment was neat and external stressors eliminated that might hinder the interview. This was done to ensure a safe, secure and comfortable environment. For example, the temperature was regulated and a “do not disturb” sign was posted on the door to curb potential disturbance. The interview only commenced after the contents of the study were explained to each individual, and each has signed an informed consent form.

#### **1.4.3.3 Entrée and establishing researcher’s roles**

Permission was granted by the Ethics Committee of the North-West University for clearance. Furthermore, permission was granted from top management of each of the different universities before the interviews started. Thereafter the managers allowed discussions with the talent recruits on the topic of the research. The participants were contacted to schedule dates and time for an interview at their convenience.

The researcher conducted and facilitated the interview. The role of the facilitator entailed an active process and not a passive one. In other words, the process was managed in such a way that the interviews covered the required subjects without influencing the actual views expressed by the participants (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The researcher encouraged an open discussion that gave participants the opportunity to express their emotions and to provide their view of the situation. The researcher strived to be objective and neutral in each interview, to avoid influencing the findings of the research (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006).

#### **1.4.3.4 Sampling**

A strategy used a purposive, voluntary sampling method. According to (Wagner *et al.*, 2012) purposive sampling is a typical case sampling used in a qualitative research study, where emblematic cases are sought and selected. The sampling strategy employed in the study was explicated further in terms of the two articles that comprised the study.

##### ***Article 1:***

As discussed in Article 1, the key persons (talent management champions) responsible for the talent management programme at each of the different universities were approached to investigate the policies and procedures ( $n = 3$ ). The criteria that were used to include participants were as follows: (1) the participant had to be the key person responsible for talent management at the university; (2) had to have access to the policies and procedures of talent management within the university; (3) had to have an efficient command of either Afrikaans or English languages, since the interviews were conducted in either of these two languages.

##### ***Article 2:***

Article 2 discusses the strategy according to which the individuals referred to as ‘talent recruits’ were selected for this research study. These participants were identified by the universities where they are employed and the names provided by the talent management champions. The participants were drawn from various faculties at different job levels (i.e. both academic and support staff, from junior level to top management). The criteria for the sampling as presented in Article 2 were (1) identified by management as talent recruits and (2) efficient use of either Afrikaans or English language – the languages of the interviews. The sample size was determined by the accessibility and willingness of participants. Interviews were held until data saturation was reached (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006). This meant that the researcher observed similarities in the data and therefore ceased the sampling by rounding off the data analysis.

#### **1.4.3.5 Data-collection method**

The present study employed the method of semi-structured interviews to collect the data. This method is explicated below in terms of the individual articles that comprise the study.

##### ***Article 1:***

Article 1 investigated face-to-face semi-structured interviews conducted with talent management champions in the different universities. This method provided a detailed picture or perception of the specific topic. The benefit of the interview method is that it allowed the researcher to build an understanding of the phenomena by observing its exact occurrences in a specific context (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006). These research studies were combined with a documentary analysis. Such an analysis entails the study of existing documents, either to understand the substantiated content or to illuminate deeper meanings that may be revealed by the style and coverage of the content (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Each sampled university's talent management policies and procedures were studied and analysed for the purpose of the scientific research. Interviews provided sufficient information and took approximately 20 minutes. The following questions were posed during the interviews:

- Does your university have a formal talent management process in place?
- Who champions talent management at the university?
- What are the criteria used to identify talent?
- What policies and procedures are used in order to identify, attract and recruit, develop, engage and retain talent?
- How does the university monitor the talent management process?
- Is talent management successful and effective at the university? Please elaborate.
- What are the challenges regarding the talent management processes that the university faces?

##### ***Article 2:***

In Article 2 the data collection method that is investigated and discussed is also the semi-structured face-to-face interviews. The interviews in this regard were conducted with the

talent recruits; these interviews took approximately 15 minutes. The following questions were posed during the interview:

- Are you aware of the fact that you are seen as a talented employee?
- Do you prefer to be formally identified as a talented employee?
- What are your needs and expectations of the universities' talent management programme?
- What would the implications be if your needs and expectations are not met?

#### **1.4.3.6 Research procedure**

Ethical approval and an ethical clearance number from the researcher's university were first obtained before continuing with the research study. Written consent was provided by the participating universities as well as by each of the participants. Before the interviews were conducted, the researcher gave a comprehensive overview of the study to explain the main objectives of the research. The researcher made it clear that participation was voluntary and participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any given time. The participants were ensured that the research would be anonymous and confidential throughout. Participants completed a consent form to give authorisation for tape-recorded sessions. Participants agreed that the data may be used for research purposes.

#### **1.4.3.7 Recording of data**

The data for the present study were collected by consulting documents and through semi-structured interviews. The recording of the data is explained in more detail as discussed in the individual articles.

##### ***Article 1:***

In Article 1, the focus was on the data that were collected by means of documents (policies, procedures, strategies or talent management activities) and semi-structured personal interviews. With the participants' permission, the interviews were tape-recorded and afterwards transcribed into a Microsoft Excel processing document. The information was stored in a safe area and the identity of participants was kept anonymous throughout the research process.

##### ***Article 2:***

Article 2 discussed the semi-structured interviews employed to collect the data. After signing an informed-consent form the participants were interviewed by tape recorder, to record the responses. The information was stored safely and anonymity was maintained throughout.

#### **1.4.3.8 Data analysis**

The written transcripts were accurately analysed by focusing on the content. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) explains that the qualitative method of analysis can be used to focus attention on the content and contextual meaning of the text, which will help the researcher draw valid inferences that can be replicated. Jupp (2006) defines content analysis as a methodical and summative approach that measures the frequency of elements within documents such as images or text. Content analysis can be done by hand or through a computer programme (Vogt, Gardner & Haeffele, 2012). The present study used Microsoft Excel to analyse, reduce and interpret the data (Struwig & Stead, 2001). The researcher started off the data analysis by editing the interviews and dividing the responses into meaningful units, until it formed sentences and paragraphs. These meaningful units were clustered into categories of central themes. Editing as technique was used to review the themes and classify them into smaller and more comparable sub-themes. The analysis of the data as presented and discussed in the individual articles is elaborated below.

##### ***Article 1:***

Article 1 discussed the use of a qualitative document analysis (QDA) to analyse the talent management programmes of the participating universities. These programmes included the following aspects related to talent management: policies, procedures, strategies, activities, and institutional plans. Altheide (1996) describes QDA is an integrated method, procedure and technique for locating, identifying, retrieving and analysing documents to determine their applicability, significance and meaning for the research concerned.

##### ***Article 2:***

Although a content analysis was used throughout the study, a thematic content analysis was used during phase two. Braun and Clarke (2006) refer to thematic data analysis as a method that helps the researcher to identify, analyse, and report collective themes or patterns that have been discovered within the data.

To verify the results, a co-coder was used and, if consensus was not reached between the researcher and co-coder, an additional third independent industrial psychologist would have

consulted. However consensus was reached between the researcher and co-coder and therefore a third independent industrial psychologist was not needed.

#### **1.4.3.9 Strategies employed to ensure quality data**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1999) there are four constructs that reflect the assumption of the qualitative paradigm, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. These constructs are elaborated below.

*Credibility* implies the inner validity, which demonstrates that the concept is constructed in such a manner that it ensures the accurate identification of themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1999). By making use of the co-coder, the researcher ensured accurate identification of subjects (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The credibility of the present study was enhanced further by using direct quotations of the participants (Rossouw, 2003).

*Transferability* determines whether the findings of the research study can be transferred between different situations (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1999). The researcher ensured transferability by deploying a multiple case study strategy. Three universities, of the total 24 HEI'S in South Africa participated in the research study.

*Dependability* implies that the research process is rational, well documented, and audited. Dependability can be seen as the alternative for reliability (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The researcher took into account the changing state of the phenomenon selected for the study. This included the change that is created when the researcher gains a deeper understanding of the setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1999).

*Conformability* identifies the objectivity of the concept. The researcher used available evidence that supports the findings and interpretations by auditing the data. Auditing was done by documenting the procedures and through checking and rechecking the data during the entire research (Lincoln & Guba, 1999). The researcher acted with integrity, considered responses, and observed it as the participants' own experience.

To summarise: The methods that were used to ensure data quality was co-coding and the tape recording of the semi structured interviews (Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi & Wright, 2010).

#### **1.4.3.10 Ethical considerations**

According to Babbie (2007) the ethical imperative of research is that the process should not cause any harm to participants. Creswell (2003) indicates that the researcher has the ethical responsibility to guard participants within all possible sensible limits from any form of physical discomfort that may emerge from the research project.

In the present study the researcher acted in a fair, honest and respectful manner. This research took the various ethical aspects into consideration, for example: confidentiality, voluntary participation, informed consent, no deception, and no violation of privacy (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2011). The participants were informed beforehand and were notified of the context and scope of the study. As was indicated, the research proposal was submitted to the Ethical Committee of the North-West University. The ethical procedures of the different universities were also taken into consideration before the study was undertaken.

#### **1.4.3.11 Reporting style**

Qualitative research is by nature more flexible and open-minded and therefore the reporting was done in a qualitative manner by presenting the results of the research in tables (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). The primary purpose of the present study was to provide an accurate reflection of the expectations and perceptions of both talent management champions and talent recruits. Therefore themes, sub-themes, and direct quotations were used to confirm the results.

### 1.5 Overview of chapters

In Chapter 2 and 3, the findings of the research study were discussed in the form of two research articles. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the conclusions acknowledges the limitations and makes recommendations for further research. The following is an outline of this research report:

**Chapter 1** Introduction

**Chapter 2** (Research Article 1): The current state of talent management within selected universities in South Africa.

**Chapter 3** (Research Article 2): Talent recruits' needs and expectations in selected universities in South Africa.

**Chapter 4:** Conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

### 1.6 Chapter summary

This chapter presented and discussed the problem statement and the research objectives for this research study (Talent management in South African universities: Management and recruits' expectations and perceptions. The research method was explained in detail and a brief overview of the chapters in article format was given.

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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RESEARCH ARTICLE 1**

# THE CURRENT STATE OF TALENT MANAGEMENT WITHIN SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

## ABSTRACT

**Orientation:** Talented employees will be the key drivers of the university in the future through knowledge, skills, and performance. However, the retention of talent in the education sector seems to be a challenge. The universities in South Africa are confronted with the challenge of replacing talented employees as there are insufficient number of talent recruits' in the existing talent pipelines to replace them. In order to sustain a talented workforce, universities may rely on talent management programmes.

**Research purpose:** The aim of the present study was to review the current state of strategies, policies and procedures to manage talent within South African universities.

**Motivation for the study:** Limited research was undertaken to date on the current state of talent management within the universities of South Africa. If university management become knowledgeable of their current state of talent management they would have a benchmark to compare themselves against?

**Research design, approach, and method:** A qualitative research design with a multiple case study strategy was followed. Three South African universities participated in the research study ( $N = 3$ ). The responsible person for driving talent management within their institutions were interviewed ( $n = 3$ ). Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were used to gather the data. In addition, a document analysis was conducted to review the participating universities' strategies, policies and procedures for managing talent. The aim of the research was to assess the status of talent management programmes at the mentioned three universities.

**Main findings:** The participating universities do not seem to have formal talent management programmes in place. The three universities have different perspectives on how talent within the universities are defined, which leads to vast differences in their identification, attraction and recruiting, as well as engagement and retention of talent. Only limited strategies, policies or procedures were in place to support the talent management programmes.

**Practical/managerial implications:** The lack of well-defined and formulated talent management programmes at the three participating universities is a cause for concern. It is suggested that universities urgently pay attention to their talent management programmes in

order to identify attract and recruit, engage and retain talented employees, and thereby stay globally competitive as an institution of higher education.

**Contribution:** The present study adds to the literature and the body of knowledge on the research topic, as limited studies to date have empirically demonstrated the current status of talent management within the universities of South Africa.

**Keywords:** talent management, universities, policies and procedures.

## **Introduction**

Talent management has become a top managerial priority for most organisations as well as an undeniable fascination for researchers since the beginning of the 21st century (Deloitte, 2010; Schiemann, 2014). Universities function similar to most organisations, in a global, complex, dynamic and highly competitive environment. Therefore talent management should be a high priority for universities (Van der Brink, Fruytier & Theunnissen, 2013). In addition, strategies, policies and procedures to execute effective talent management within the universities should also be high on universities' agendas.

The main reason why it is necessary to implement a strategy, a policy or procedure to manage talent is because the workforce is changing radically and organisations place a high demand on talented employees (Dychtwald, Erickson & Morison, 2013). Evidence from research suggests that the workforce is aging and is moving into retirement (Deloitte, 2010; Knowledge Resources, 2015). Given the fact that organisations have a challenge to replace this knowledgeable operational segment of the workforce, it is suggested that universities in particular attract new and retain talented employees (Calo, 2008; Dychtwald, Erickson & Morison, 2013).

The expectation is that talented employees will drive organisations in the future, contributing through their performance as well as outstanding skills and knowledge (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), 2007; Schiemann, 2014). If this is the case, talented employees will help institutions achieve their primary objectives, thus prioritising management of talented employees (or as the present study refers to them, 'talent recruits') even further (Knowledge Resources, 2015). Research indicated that the supply of such talent recruits are virtually limited, which makes the retention of talent even more crucial in modern organisations (Davies & Davies, 2010). In addition, the costs involved to replace knowledgeable and skilled employees can exceed 100% of their annual salary (Asset Skills, 2014; Bryant & Allen, 2013).

Despite the importance of talent management as outlined above, Becker, Huselid and Beatty (2009) remark that employees are the asset that is managed most ineffectively in most organisations. Various organisations struggle to manage their talent recruits according to their

potential. This indicates among other matters that the challenge lies in the demographical changes associated with the ageing workforce (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013). Guthridge, Komm and Lawson (2008) find that the reason why talent management is unsuccessful is because organisations keep on viewing the implementation as a short-term, tactical issue instead of a long-term, integrated business strategy. This attitude also causes problems in universities (Higher Education South Africa (HESA), 2011). Furthermore, universities fail to ensure that line managers are fully trained to execute policies, which include policies to fulfil the requirements of the talent management process (Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011).

In general, research indicated that a cost-effective and intensive talent management strategy would benefit any organisation (Scullion & Collings, 2011; Stahl, Björkman, Ferndale, Morris, Paauwe, Stiles & Wright, 2012). Therefore it can be assumed that such a strategy will also hold true for universities. HESA (2011) states that structured and well-supported programmes can provide new opportunities and positive aspects to employee experience and careers within the university. Effective practices of human resource management, which include talent management, may increase the levels of employee engagement and their overall institutional performance (Burke, Koyuncu, Fiksenbaum & Yasemin, 2013). However, it appears that the talent management process is difficult for any organisation and therefore the assumption can be made, that it will be a challenge for universities as well (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013). It is suggested that the risks of being undercapitalised in skilled and knowledgeable employees should be reduced (Riccio, 2010).

Currently universities project themselves as a continuous learning environment where forward thinking is one of their main objectives, yet they struggle to deal with their programmes for talent management (Davies & Davies, 2010; Riccio, 2010). It is evident that the sustaining and building of a strong talent pipeline remains important (Deloitte, 2010). In order for universities to gain a globally competitive advantage, they should have in place strategies, policies and procedures to manage the talent (Riccio, 2010). However, it is unclear whether South African universities have formal talent management programmes and, if so, it is not clear how these programmes are operated. Furthermore, there is no clear evidence that these talent management programmes are effective and indeed make a meaningful contribution by helping to achieve the universities' objectives.

## Research purpose and objectives

### **General objective**

The general objective of the present study was to explore how policies and procedures are implemented and managed to identify, attract and recruit and then develop, engage and retain talented employees in South African universities.

### **Specific objectives**

The general aim can be broken down into these specific objectives:

- to explore how talent management policies and procedures were conceptualised in the literature.
- to determine whether South African universities have formal talent management procedures, policies or programmes in place.
- to identify the individuals chosen by universities to champion their respective talent management processes.
- to explore which policies and procedures were implemented in South African universities to identify, attract and recruit and then develop, engaged and retain talent.
- to examine how South African universities monitor the talent management process.
- to determine whether South African universities consider their talent management as successful.
- To identify the challenges experienced by South African universities in managing their talent.
- To formulate recommendations based on the findings of this research

This section will be followed by a literature study. Thereafter, the methodology employed in the present study will be explained, followed by the findings of the study. The discussion of the findings will be concluded by pointing out the limitations and making recommendations.

## Literature review

The applicable themes that were captured from the literature are presented and discussed below under these sub-headings: Talent management, the talent management process and the value of talent management.

### **Talent management**

The challenge of talent management lies in the ability to match the supply and demand of employees and their skills accurately. The growth of potential in an organisation depends on its ability to have the right people, at the right time in the right place (Deloitte, 2010). This also applies to universities, as pointed out by Ngobeni and Bezuidenhout (2011). These scholars indicate that one of the challenges South Africa is facing, is to identify, attract, develop, as well as engage and retain valuable and skilled employees within universities. This process is typically referred to as talent management (Barkhuizen, Roodt & Schutte, 2014). Talent management lacks a clear and constant definition and scholars in the field differ on a single generally accepted definition (Theunnissen, Boselie & Fruytier, 2013). CIPD (2009) stated that talent management is the systematic desirability that identify, develop and retain those who are viewed as valuable assets to an organisation, either because of their high potential that can be useful in the future, or because they fulfil the critical business roles.

According to Yarnall (2011), talent management is a process focused on attracting scarce resources in a competitive labour market where the focus is on the selection and evaluation of new talent. Furthermore, talent management is a process that can be used to manage people and their characteristics within the organisation, and thereby ensure that both the individuals and organisations achieve their goals (Festing, Kornau, & Schäfer, 2015). In other words, talent management is a matter of anticipating the need for human capital and a plan of action to meet those needs (Capelli, 2008). In general, most scholars indicate that talent management focuses on an intricate process of identifying, attracting and recruiting employees that will be key players in the organisation's future. This includes developing, retaining and involving these employees in the organisation (Barkhuizen *et al.*, 2014b; Meyers & Van Woerkom, 2014). Beechler and Woodward (2009) also suggest that

organisations that excel in talent management have a reliable in-house programme to deal with the identified talent.

For the purpose of the present study, talent management activities will thus be seen to include the above-mentioned aspects of this process: from the identification to the retention of talented employees in selected South African universities.

### **The talent management process**

The process of talent management is challenging since it requires the simultaneous selection of the right talent, skills and time-frame to ensure that the engagement level for those employees are high (Yarnall, 2011). Armstrong and Taylor (2014) explain that talent management operates within the parameters of a talent strategy, policies and procedures:

- *Strategy* can be described as “a plan that is intended to achieve a particular purpose” (Strategy, 2015a). In other words, it functions as “a detailed plan for achieving success in situation such as war, politics, business, industry or sport, or the skill of planning for such situation” (Strategy, 2015b).
- *Policy* is “a plan of action agreed or chosen by a political party, a business, etc.” (Policy, 2015a). Policies are “a set of ideas or a plan of what to do in particular situations that has been agreed officially by a group of people, a business organization, a government, or a political party” (Policy, 2015b).
- *Procedure* can be defined as “a way of doing something, especially the usual or correct way” (Procedure, 2015a). In other words it entails “a set of actions that is the official or accepted way of doing something” (Procedure, 2015b).

Based on the explication above it is clear that strategies, policies and procedures have similar objectives and these documents can be used as an agreed plan of action, which the relevant stakeholders are able to execute in such a way that they achieve success. Armstrong and Taylor (2014) state that talent management starts with talent planning, followed by a sequence of activities of resourcing and talent development to produce a talent pool. The process of talent management can be illustrated in Figure 1 below.

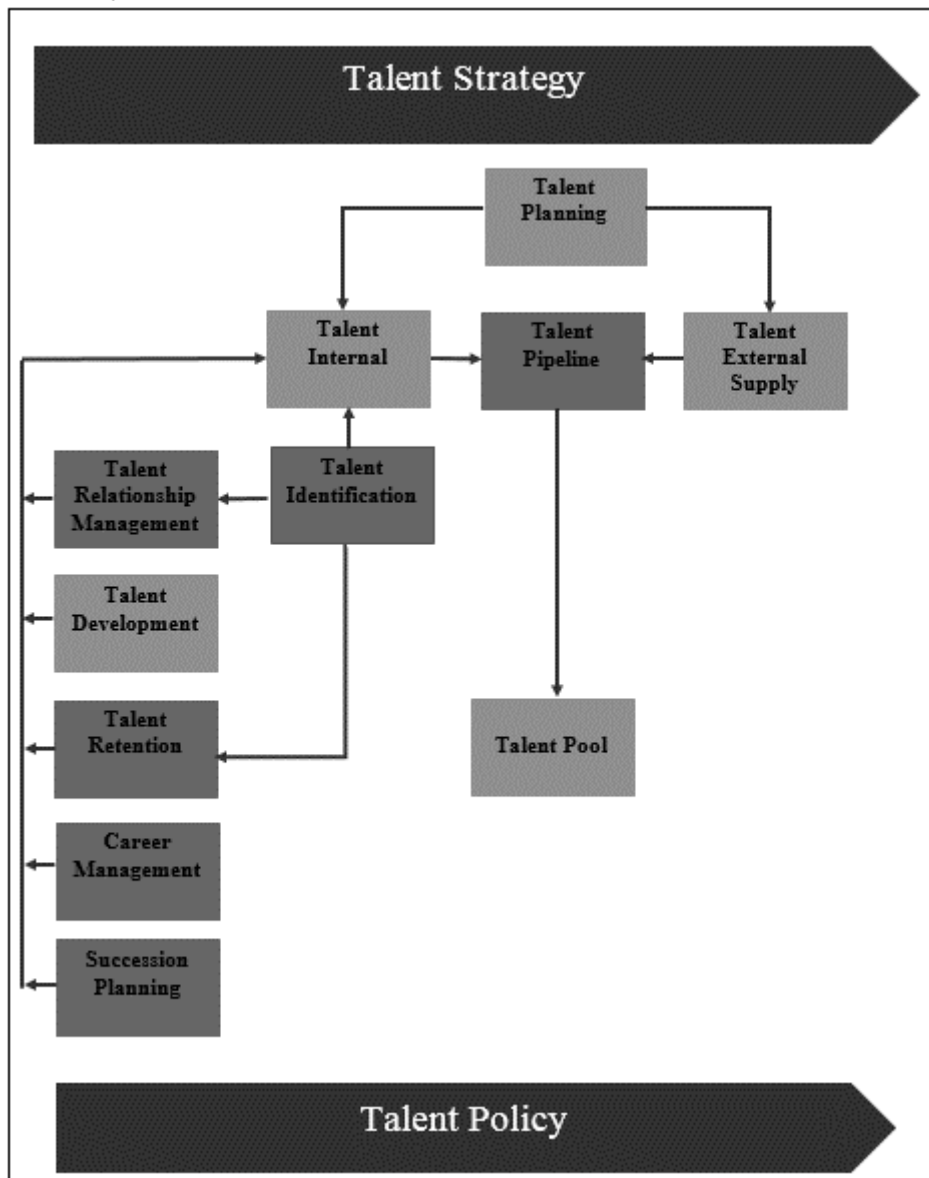


Figure 1: Talent-management process (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014)

It is important to understand that the process of talent management starts with a business strategy. The future demand for talent recruits should be identified in order to develop and retain talented employees through the talent pipeline. Figure 1 explains the talent management process as follows:

- *Talent planning*: Anticipating the need for talent in the future. Talent planning leads to the developing of policies to attract and retain the talent recruits, and are monitored through talent audits.
- *Talent identification*: Organisations use talent audits to establish which individuals form part of the talent pool. Performance management systems identify those with

abilities and potential. The employees who are identified as talented employees are meant to benefit from learning and development as well as programmes to manage their career.

- *Talent relationship management:* This means to validate a talented employee. The process includes the following activities: provide opportunities for growth, treat talented employees fairly, achieve talent engagement and ensure that employees are committed to their work.
- *Talent development:* Policies guiding learning and development are key components. Talented employees should acquire and enhance skills and competencies, especially through leadership and management programmes.
- *Talent retention:* This ensures that the talent recruits are committed and engaged to the organisation; implementing policies to retain talented employees.
- *Career management:* This implies opportunities for employees to grow within their careers in order to satisfy their own aspirations.
- *Management succession planning:* It is important to manage the organisation's future needs by anticipating the need for talent and being able to fulfil these needs in time.
- *The talent pipeline:* Entails processes of resourcing, talent development and career planning with the aim to maintain the flow of talent needed for the talent pool as required by the organisation.
- *The talent pool:* A group of talented employees that the organisation can select from.

As explained above, talent management focuses on the identification, attraction and recruitment of talented employees with the aim to develop, engage and retain these employees. The talent management process will be discussed below through the following themes: identify talent, attracting and recruiting future assets, developing talent and talent retention and engagement .

### *Identifying talent*

Talent has become the heartbeat of most organisations and therefore cannot be negated. This phenomenon entails the distinction of a particular ability, increased success and the performance of an individual in comparison to others (Ross, 2013). Furthermore, talent recruits are identified as individuals who have the required competencies to help the organisation achieve a competitive advantage (Silzer & Dowell, 2010). According to Silzer

and Church (2009) the identification of talent recruits should not be linked to a specific job or a particular position. An individual could be considered as talented based on his or her capability to develop and grow in order to fill executive positions at some point in the future.

The criterion that Ready, Conger and Hill (2010) use to identify talent, is stand-out individuals who deliver solid results in their occupation. Talent can also be identified through performance appraisals. Such appraisals can be used to rate an individual's performances and establish whether he or she meets or exceeds the job's basic needs. However, it can be questioned whether such a broad approach has significant value in identifying talent (Mäkelä, Björkman & Ehrnrooth, 2010; Björkman, Ehrnrooth, Mäkelä, Smale & Sumelius, 2013). The reason why performance appraisals' contribution to talent identification can be queried is because it specifically provides information on past performances over against set objectives.

The literature indicates that organisations also utilise other methods to identify talent among their employees. Asset skills (2014) explain the different methods used to identify talent, which include the following: 360 degree feedback, knowledge assessments, psychometric testing, performance appraisals, performance matrix and professional development plans. Mäkelä *et al.* (2010) find that talent reviews are recently being merged with performance appraisals. These types of reviews include the efforts of senior management to determine the potential of an individual. In addition, such reviews are considered to move beyond merely a line manager's appraisal of an individual employee.

It is worth noting that the identification of talent recruits is a process, which needs to be managed with care, since it can demotivate those who are not found to be part of the talent pool (Ross, 2013). On the other hand, those identified as talent may view it positively: that they are sought after by management and will most probably remain in the organisation (Silzer & Church, 2009; Theunnissen *et al.*, 2013). However, Theunnissen *et al.* (2013) explain that authentic deployment of talent and performance management processes has barely been studied. To be precise there is a need for direction on the tools that are most effective in identifying talent.

### *Attracting and recruiting future assets*

The twenty-first century brought about dramatic changes and a new paradigm has emerged that highlights processes involving people and continued improvement. Only those who are willing to adapt and improve their current attraction and recruitment practices will be able to turn the 'war for talent' to their own advantage (Suutari, Wurtz & Tornikoski, 2014).

Attracting talent implies an employer's action to bring a job vacancy to the attention of potential future employees (Van Dijk, 2008). The employer's task is influencing candidates to submit their application and then to retain their interest until a job offer is made for the position that will possibly lead to acceptance of the post (Breugh, 2008). Recruitment can be seen as a two-strategy process in which people align with roles and roles align with people (Cunningham, 2007; Ng, 2013; Phillips & Gully, 2015).

Coates *et al.* (2009) highlighted the challenge of attracting the right people for careers within universities. Outstanding, talented employees are much sought after, therefore they have the luxury to search for positions that offer a valuable proposition that attracts them (Ng, 2013). The truth is that people need to feel appreciated and seek the confirmation that they can make a meaningful contribution to an organisation. If a university career seems to be an attractive future career choice for intelligent and devoted people, then it is necessary for management to paint a rational picture to prospective talent recruits regarding the requirements to fulfil the role (Van Dijk, 2008).

Research has shown that the financial aspect is not the only factor that attracts talent recruits. These recruits also have the need to have control over their careers (Capelli, 2008). Other attraction factors are the opportunity to develop as employee's, flexibility in the workplace, and working under managers who maintain accountability without power and control (Eversole, Venneberg & Crowder, 2012). Furthermore, if an organisation wishes to attract the best candidates for the position it is necessary that the recruiting strategy, policy and procedure are implemented in such a way that it functions as a guide to retain, develop and optimise the benefit of the individual and organisation alike (Stahl *et al.*, 2012; Suutari *et al.*, 2014; Van Dijk, 2008).

An effective recruiting strategy entails the ability to tap into specific labour pools. It is important for organisations to examine their strength and their workforce policies and procedures (Lockwood, 2006). Stahl *et al.* (2012) point out that most companies follow a talent pool strategy. In other words, the company recruits the best people and then places them into positions rather than attempt to recruit certain individuals to fit specific positions. The strategies for recruiting talent recruits make use of different channels such as direct applications through the internet, on-campus recruitment fairs, and summer internship programmes (Stahl *et al.*, 2012). In addition, as Suutari *et al.* (2014) emphasise, if employers wish to attract and recruit the best talent in the market their organisation needs to make a positive first impression. Furthermore, the recruiting manager should react swiftly by reading Curriculum Vitae's scheduling interviews and making job offers, seeing that other organisations are also competing for the talent. Therefore, those who respond the fastest is bound to end up gaining the talent recruit.

Regarding universities, it is evident that these institutions should change its workforce planning by recruiting the right talent at the right time since waiting for a shortage crisis in talent and then recruiting will be too late, and the damaging effect on the university will be unmeasurable (Coates & Goedegebuure, 2012). However, it seems that a large number of universities have not paid enough attention to strategies to make positions attractive enough (Vilkinas & Ladyshewsky, 2014). According to Van der Brink *et al.* (2013) an outstanding research reputation and extensive financial resources will be contributory factors to recruit top employees for the university.

### *Developing talent*

The so-called Baby Boomers (born from 1946-1964) are soon to be retired from their positions in the universities. This does not leave sufficient time to develop talent recruits who may fill the gap (Lynch, 2007; Theron, Barkhuizen & Du Plessis, 2014). Coates and Goedegebuure (2012) also confirm the retirement of a large growing senior labour force within the following five years (i.e. 2012-2017). Garavan, Carbery and Rock (2012) define talent development as the process to implement and manage development strategies for talent recruits to ensure that the organisation has a future source of talented employees. Furthermore, their definition indicates that talent development involves tactical objectives and development activities that are associated with the organisation's processes of talent

management. Therefore it is clear that talent development entails the training and grooming of talent recruits in order to ensure that their skills and knowledge can be employed to help achieve the organisation's objectives (CIPD, 2007). Based on the arguments above, the importance of developing talent within a specific time-frame cannot be denied. According to Collings and Mellahi (2009) talent development is one of the key elements in the process of managing talent.

The reason why organisations undertake activities of talent development is to ensure the sustainability of talent recruits (Garavan *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, organisations utilise activities to develop talent for succession planning rather than attempting to keep up with staff turnover and improve the organisation's reputation for being a 'talent magnet' (Gandz, 2006). It has been shown conclusively that talent management enables employers to shape and plan the development of employees within the organisation to fulfil the organisation's goals as well as to improve the employee's performance potential and personal objectives (Sookraj, 2009; Stahl *et al.*, 2012). McCauley and Wakefield (2006) propose that a talent mind-set should be cultivated in order to achieve the organisation's goals.

Methods available to develop talented employees include the usual traditional methods such as on-the-job training, e-learning, or classroom training (Conger, 2010). Other methods that can be used to develop talented employees is mentoring and coaching. These programmes entail the transfer of tacit and other valuable knowledge (Calo, 2008). However, in the workplace the emphasis should move beyond the technical skills with more focus placed on the so-called soft skills (personal characteristics that enable a person to interact harmoniously with other individuals) of talented employees (Garavan *et al.*, 2012). However, it is important to note: Motivating talented employees to increase training in their particular skills will most likely encourage them to stay within the organisation (Govaerts, Kyndt, Dochy & Baert, 2011). It is also worth noting that training and development programmes cannot function in isolation. For organisations to thrive in their talent management programmes the focus should be on leadership development and, furthermore, senior leaders should be involved in the process (Knowledge Resources, 2015; Stahl *et al.*, 2012).

### *Talent engagement and retention*

The two aspects of engagement and retention of talent recruits form an integral part of the success of implementing the talent management process (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Barkhuizen, Mogwere & Schutte, 2014b). Engaging and retaining talent recruits can mean the difference for organisations between retaining a competitive edge and losing ground to their competitors (Talent Keepers, 2015). The majority of scholars in the human resource field emphasise the fact that people are an organisation's most valuable asset, therefore staff engagement and retention are key priorities for such an enterprise (Ng'ethe, Irvaro & Namusonge, 2012).

Losing talent recruits has serious implications for the organisation. These include: work disruptions, losses in customer service or productivity, loss of organisational memory along with tactical or strategic knowledge, withdrawal of mentors, diminished diversity and even turnover 'contamination' where other employees follow the leavers' example (Cascio, 2006). Furthermore, the financial impact should be factored in according to which replacing employees can exceed 100% of the annual compensation for the position due to recruiting, selecting, and development of new employees (Asset Skills, 2014; Bryant & Allen, 2013). HESA (2011) points out the significant challenges when retaining key and talented academic staff. Therefore there is a need for a tactical approach to the engagement and retention of talent recruits in order to gain a return on investment (Bergiel, Nguyen, Clenney & Taylor, 2009).

Financial factors play a significant role in engaging and retaining talent recruits. However, there are other factors to consider such as job satisfaction, managing employees, organisational commitment, supervisory relationship and the relationship with others. These factors should also be incorporated into the strategy, policies and procedures of the organisation (Talent Keepers, 2015). Other aspects necessary for the talent management system include: role expectations, role conflict, and the managers' responsibility to communicate opportunities for growth (Bryant & Allen, 2013).

According to Hay (2002) talent recruits are most likely to consider leaving the organisation when their employer fails to identify and develop their talent or when management do not take their career development into consideration. Other reasons for such a turnover include

dissatisfaction with their managers or the lack of clear mission, vision and goals in the organisation. When job markets improve, several talent recruits might consider exploring new horizons (Bryant & Allen, 2013).

Recent research indicates that there are no guaranteed recipes or instant solutions for retaining talent recruits in an organisation (Stahl *et al.*, 2012). However, it is suggested that organisations should invest in countering the reasons why talent recruits leave. In a study by Theron *et al.* (2014), talented academic staff within South Africa reported that compensation, recognition and support from management will be factors that would encourage them to remain with the university. Dychtwald *et al.* (2013) indicate that employees currently seek flexibility regarding their work arrangements, learning and compensation and benefits.

In light of the information above, the strategies to engage and retain talent recruits remain an important matter within universities (Barkhuizen *et al.*, 2014a; Riccio, 2010; Van der Brink *et al.*, 2013). Pienaar and Bester (2008) find that the appointment of well qualified and committed employees will allow universities to ensure sustainability and quality in the long term.

### **The value of talent management**

The purpose of talent management is typically to nurture those employees who are beneficial to the organisation (Theunnissen *et al.*, 2013). This is mostly done by organisations in an attempt to remain competitive in the world of work, which currently is threatened by globalisation, increased competition and rapid economic change (Brunila & Baedcke Yllner, 2013). The need for talent management has emerged due to various strategic reasons. Some of these include: the increasing mobility of organisations and people, transformation, workforce diversities, different cultures, and an increased need for skills and knowledge (Beechler & Woodward, 2009).

According to Ashton and Morton (2004) talent management will become the next core competency in the human resources domain. Recently the status did not change as Knowledge Resources (2015, p. 6) states: “The ‘new’ economy relies on skilled and knowledge workers. This situation is similar in South Africa ...”. Furthermore, the report also indicates that 68% of the participants emphasises meeting future skills as the main objective

for their talent management activities. Nevertheless, the responsibility for talent management stretches far beyond the human resources department where numerous role-players influence the programmes for managing talent (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). The challenge is the lack of information in the literature on the roles and impact of various stakeholders in the talent management process (Theunnissen *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, the suggestion is that the roles of those individuals responsible to manage talent programmes have to be clarified, seeing that this can influence the effectiveness of these programmes significantly.

In addition to the impact of role-players on the effectiveness of the programmes, the benefits and the costs of activities to manage talent (i.e. the different mentioned component of the process, from identifying to retaining talent) may affect these programmes (Capelli, 2008). Talent management can deliver a higher profit when it is linked with the organisation's business strategy (Brunila & Baedecke Yllner, 2013). The value of talent management is visible in the achievement of an organisation's goals and receiving return on investments (Brunila & Baedecke Yllner, 2013). By ensuring that talent management strategies, policies and procedures are in place, universities will be able to reduce turnover costs, assure a high level of service and delivery to students, and even facilitate development of their employees (Cobb, 2013).

Contrary to the scenario above, universities do not adapt easily to talent management activities and therefore may fail to have the right people occupying the post (Lynch, 2007). The reasons for this failure, however, are unclear and therefore further investigation is still needed. Iles (2007) confirms that to date limited research has been done on the application of strategies, policies and procedures for talent management. Lynch (2007) even points out that only a few universities have implemented comprehensive talent management policies and procedures that could attract, engage, and retain employees (Barkhuizen *et al.*, 2014a; Theron *et al.*, 2014). Thus, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the nature of talent management strategies, policies and procedures as applied in South African universities.

Nevertheless, the individuals responsible for driving talent management may interpret the phenomenon, talent management, differently (Creswell, 2009). This results in different individual perceptions of talent management. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to explore from an interpretive perspective how individuals responsible for driving talent

management within selected universities in South Africa execute their strategies, policies and procedures, and which of these processes are in place at the universities concerned.

## **Research design**

The research design employed in the present study consists of a research approach, research strategy and research method. These aspects will be discussed subsequently.

### Research approach

The study made use of a qualitative research method. According to Kreuger and Neuman (2005) qualitative research is a behavioural or social science that explores human behaviour, in this case talent management. Since there is limited information on talent management within selected universities of South Africa, a preliminary exploratory research was undertaken. In accordance with this research, a qualitative exploratory approach was followed, informed by the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive approach does not search for common truths but brings to light the participant's subjective perceptions of the current state (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2011) – in this case employees' perception of how talent are managed through the designated programme within certain universities of South Africa. Qualitative research studies working from the interpretative paradigm has the belief that individuals construct knowledge through their ideographic ability (Gray, 2014; Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012). In other words, the case may be that universities project their own meaning and reality on the execution of talent management.

As methodology the research study applied a phenomenological case study approach. The phenomenological case study method is applied by engaging the participant's life setting as it occurs naturally (De Vos *et al.*, 2011). How talent is managed within selected South African universities needs to be understood from the universities' perspective. Therefore, the deeper meaning of the participants' ontology and epistemology (the view of their reality and knowledge within their current life setting) were explored (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). The researcher also made use of data triangulation to determine areas of agreement as well as divergence (Guion, Diehl & McDonald, 2011). The aim was to develop a framework consisting of ideas and insights formulated during an exploration of talent management in a

specific life setting, the university. The researcher played the role of facilitator, and could therefore use objective views to interpret the research findings (De Vos *et al.*, 2011).

### Research strategy

The research strategy employed in the present study was a purposive voluntary sample and entailed an explorative case study (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). According to Rule and John (2011) through such a case study researchers strives to understand a specific phenomenon by spending time on it through observation and investigation. Thereby they can generate accurate data to help them understand the phenomenon sufficiently. For the purpose of the present research, a multiple case study was used since more than one university in South Africa were included in the research (Creswell, 2007).

### Research method

The research method consisted of the researched settings, entrée and by establishing researcher roles. The method included the research participants and sampling methods, research procedures, data collection methods, recording of the data, data analysis and reporting. It also focused on strategies to ensure quality data and on ethical considerations.

### **Research setting**

Since the physical environment and research setting can affect the results of the research (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006), the participants were interviewed at their own location, in this case at the university where they are employed. The participants were approached in their personal work setting and the interviews were conducted in each participant's own office to eliminate interruption as far as possible.

### **Entrée and establishing researcher role**

Ethical approval was obtained from the university where the researcher studies, to continue with this research project. Permission was also granted by all the participating universities, as well as by the primary responsible person for driving talent management within each of the

participating universities. The researcher acted in multiple roles as an interviewer, and facilitator, listener and transcriber (Creswell, 2009). The research was done in an objective and neutral way to avoid subjective influence on the research study (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006).

### **Research participation and sampling methods**

Six of the largest universities in South Africa were invited to take part in the study. Only three universities eventually participated in the study ( $N = 3$ ), seeing that two universities did not respond and another university indicated that they did not have a programme for talent management. At each of the participating universities the staff member primarily responsible for driving the talent management programme, was interviewed ( $n = 3$ ). This allowed the researcher to gain insight into the policies and procedures of the talent management programmes at each of the selected three universities.

A strategy of purposive voluntary sampling was followed. This form of sampling represents specific cases (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006). The researcher specifically aimed to gather information from the designated talent management champion at each of the selected universities. The data would provide an accurate reflection of the current status of talent management in the universities of South Africa. This was considered a perfect choice for the sample since the talent management champions are the people responsible for managing talent recruits through their various programmes for talent management.

The participating universities that were included in the research study had to have an active talent management programme in place or another active programme fulfilling this function. In addition, the different policies, procedures and strategies for talent management were investigated and evaluated. For this purpose, an analysis was documented of the talent management policies, procedures and strategies followed by each of the participating universities (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The profile of participants are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

*Profile of Participants (n = 3)*

Item	Category	Frequency
Ethnicity	Black	1
	White	2
Gender	Male	2
	Female	1
Language	Afrikaans	2
	English	1
Age	41-50	1
	51-60	2
Qualification	Postgraduate degree (Honours, Master's or Doctorate)	3
Employment section	Human Resource Department	2
	Vice Chancellor (responsible for talent management)	1

According to Table 1, of the three participants, one was a female and two were males. One participant was Black and two were White. Two participants were between the age 51-60 and one was between 41-50 years old. All the participants held managerial positions and have at least three year tertiary education qualifications. Of the participants two were employed with managerial positions at the human resource department, and one participant was employed as the Vice Chancellor.

### **Research procedure**

Regarding the research procedure, firstly, ethical approval was obtained from the researcher's university to continue with the research project. Thereafter written consent was provided by the participating universities and each of these participants gave their written informed consent to participate in the study. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews held with the participants. Before the interviews were conducted, the researcher gave an overview of the study to explain the main objectives of the research. It was emphasised that

the research was voluntary and that participants could withdraw from the study at any given time. The researcher also explained that the research results were confidential and would be treated anonymous. Participants completed a consent form as permission to use a tape recorder and to use the data for research purposes. Finally, for the purpose of the document analysis the participants were asked to provide the researcher with the policies, procedures or any relevant documents that relates to talent management within their university.

### **Data-collection methods**

The study made use of face-to-face, semi-structured interviews as well as a document analysis. The main advantage of semi-structured interviews is that it builds an understanding of the phenomena by noting individual cases in a specific setting (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006). This method enables the researcher to obtain a detailed picture of the participants' viewpoints about the specific topic (De Vos *et al.*, 2011). In the case of the present study the view was on how talent are managed within the participating universities of South Africa.

Each interview was conducted in either English or Afrikaans, depending on the participant's language preference. One of the participants answered the interview questions partly in Afrikaans and therefore it had to be translated by a professional translator. The interviews took an average of 20 minutes and the following questions were included in the interview schedule in order to reach the objective of the study:

- Does your university have a formal talent management process in place?
- Who champions talent management at your university?
- What policies and procedures are used in order to identify, attract and recruit, develop, engage and retain talent at your university?
- How does your university monitor the talent management process?
- Is talent management successful and effective at your university? Please elaborate.
- What are the challenges regarding the talent management processes that your university faces?

In addition to the questions above, the participants were also requested to provide the researcher with the policies and procedural documents, or any other related material on the

talent management process at each of the participating universities. Thereafter a document analysis was done of the process followed by each participating university. This was done to corroborate the information provided by the participants during the interviews and to identify possible discrepancies between the participants' view (i.e. occurrences in practice) as opposed to the intended policies and procedures of the university.

### **Recording of the data**

Each one of the participants granted the researcher permission to voice record content from the semi-structured interviews. This was done by a digital voice recorder. After the interviews, the data were stored on a computer and the files were password protected to ensure confidentiality of the recorded information.

### **Data analysis**

The data recorded during the interviews were transcribed accurately and thereafter analysed by means of qualitative content analysis (De Vos *et al.*, 2011; Gray, 2014). This analysis focused on the setting and contextual meaning (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) of the participants' responses to the interview questions. According to Struwig and Stead (2001), content analysis can be described as a methodical analysis of text in order to verify patterns. After the semi-structured interviews were conducted, it was transcribed into a single data set, following the sequence of the interview questions. The researcher first read the transcribed data for an overview of ways in which participants manage talent within their university. The data was then coded and analysed by making use of the mentioned content analysis method.

The researcher also used the method of a qualitative document analysis. Such an analysis follows the same approach as a content analysis, however, the generated data are examined by means of documents and records relevant to a particular study (De Vos *et al.*, 2011; Wagner *et al.*, 2012). The participating universities' policies, procedures, or relevant documents used to manage their talented employees were analysed by means of a document analysis, or more precisely, a qualitative document analysis (QDA) (Altheide, Coyle, DeVriese & Schneider, 2008). The QDA approach is focused more on recurring themes and trends than in ordinary frequencies and statistically inferred relationships (Krippendorff, 2004). Altheide (1996) describes QDA as an integrated method, procedure and technique for

locating, identifying, retrieving and analysing documents to determine whether these are applicable and significant to the research focus and transfer meaning.

After the documents were received, the researcher first created a table that presented the strategies, policies and procedures that the different universities use to manage their talent. Thereafter the researcher read all the documents provided by the universities for an overview of the manner in which universities execute talent management. The documents on talent management was compared between the three universities to identify central themes. These themes enabled the researcher to formulate hypotheses about talent management within the selected universities in South Africa.

The information obtained from the interviews and the document analysis was compared to corroborate the information and to identify possible discrepancies in the data. To ensure accuracy of the content analysis and the themes extracted from the data, a co-coder was used to audit the data analysis (De Vos *et al.*, 2011; Wagner *et al.*, 2012). The co-coder was an independent industrial psychologist with a comprehensive knowledge of the theories and practice of talent management. The co-coder compared notes with the researcher to determine whether the coding was done accurately. By means of the researcher's and co-coder's notes the research was done accurately with slight changes from the co-coder.

### **Strategies to ensure quality data**

Various methods were used to ensure trustworthy data. Lincoln and Guba (1999) indicate the four constructs that reflect the statement of the qualitative paradigm, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

*Credibility:* This can be described as the inner validity of the research findings. Credibility makes the research study trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 1999). The truthfulness of the data was confirmed by triangulation as suggested by Yin (2003). In the present study, the interviews were compared with the policies and procedures provided by the particular university in order to corroborate the information obtained during the interviews. By making use of the co-coder the researcher, ensured accurate identification of themes. The researcher also strived throughout to report the participants' experiences on talent management in the university truthfully and accurately.

*Transferability:* This indicates whether the findings of the study could be transferred from a specific situation to another (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 1999). In order for the research to be relevant for other settings and contexts the researcher gave a clear description of the context of the data. In the present study the research setting, sampling, characteristics of participants, and the overall context of the study, were described in a comprehensive manner (Creswell, 2009).

*Dependability:* This construct determines whether the research process is rational and audited accurately (De Vos *et al.*, 2011). The researcher ensured that the process was logical, well documented and reviewed, by keeping record of the research's different stages. This will enable future researchers to understand and have access thorough to the description outlining on how the research process was undertaken. Because of the comprehensive description of the research method, the study can be considered dependable and future researchers can utilise similar methods.

*Conformability:* Conformability refers to the neutrality of the concept (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 1999). The researcher ensured the availability of existing evidence that supports the findings and interpretations. The participants' responses were considered and perceived as their own experience form their world view throughout the present research study.

### **Ethical considerations**

Before commencing the study, and throughout the research, the researcher had to adhere to certain ethical guidelines, which are explicated below.

*Informed consent:* Various universities within South Africa were approached. The universities were openly informed about the research objectives. Participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any given time. The inform consent meant that the participants' rights of free speech were respected and it gave them the opportunity to accept ownership for their responses during the interview.

*Right of privacy:* The researcher emphasised throughout that the participants' identity should remain confidential and anonymous. Furthermore, the researcher protected the identities of

the universities as well as the participating employees of these universities. The researcher ensured that the data was stored in a safe place and the information obtained from the interviews was not disclosed without permission of the interviewees.

*Protection of harm:* The researcher made sure that participants were not physically or emotionally harmed during the process of the research. The researcher acted in a professional manner to participants and did not try to manipulate them.

## **Reporting**

Leedy and Ormrod (2013) indicate that qualitative research is by nature more flexible and open. Therefore reporting was done in a qualitative manner. The researcher made use of tables (Creswell, 2003). The research findings were reported by referring to the talent management policies and procedures as described by the participants, as well as identified through the document analysis. The context of the data from both the interviews and the universities' policy documents were accurately and clearly reported by using direct quotations from the documents and participants' responses. This was done in order to report this research study in a truthful manner and to substantiate the findings.

## **Findings**

The primary objective of the research study was to explore how policies and procedures of talent management are implemented and how the talent recruits are managed at selected South African universities. The findings indicate which policies and procedures are in place to drive and support the talent management programme at each university.

For the results, the research questions were used to answer and support the specific research objectives of this present study (see *specific objectives*). Six of the largest universities in South Africa were targeted to participate in the research. However, only four responded to the invitation to take part in the research study. Two of these four universities confirmed that they do have an active talent management programme. The other two universities claimed not to have any programme, policy or procedure in place to manage their talent. One of the latter, however, informed the researcher that their university employs a performance appraisal

system as a means to manage their talent recruits. Therefore the response rate was 50% ( $N = 3$ ).

For the qualitative research, interviews were conducted to gather data about the programmes through which the selected universities in South Africa identify, recruit, develop, engage and retain talented employees. The findings were substantiated with direct<sup>1</sup> quotes from the participants. This was followed by an analysis of the active policies, procedures and documents used by the universities to manage their talent. These documents are presented in a table format to gain an overview of the available documented data on the talent management programmes. The documents included policies, procedures, as well as strategic and institutional plans describing the full process of dealing with talented employees within the different universities. The active documents that provide the information on universities' talent management are displayed in Table 2 below.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the interviews, which were originally conducted in Afrikaans, have been translated into English by an accredited translator. These translated responses of the participants, the three universities, are presented below.

Table 2

*Universities' talent management policies, procedures and programs*

Universities	Document name	Responsible for execution	Reviewed date	Refer to other documents	Type of document
<b>University 1</b>					
Identifying talent	*			Employment Equity Plan	Plan
Recruiting talent	Recruitment Policy	Executive Director: Human Capital	2012	Institutional Plan, Employment Equity Plan	Plan; policy
Developing talent	Academic Staff Promotion Policy				Policy
	Training and Development Policy	Executive Director: Human Capital	2013	Employment Equity Plan; Performance Management Policy; Institutional plan	Plan; policy
	Leadership and Management Academy Business Plan		2012		Plan
Talent retention	*			Recruitment Policy	Policy

Universities	Document name	Responsible for execution	Reviewed date	Refer to other documents	Type of document
Talent engagement	*				
Additional documents	Performance Management Policy	Executive Director: Human Capital	2005		Policy
	Institutional Plan 2012-2014		2011		Plan
	University 1: Employment Equity Plan: Key Objectives Regarding Affirmative Action Measures	Institutional management, campus management, Deans, School Directors, Heads of Departments, Employment Equity Officer	No date		Plan
<b>University 2</b>					
Identifying talent	*				
Recruiting talent	*			University 2: Institutional Plan 2012-2016	Plan

Universities	Document name	Responsible for execution	Reviewed date	Refer to other documents	Type of document
Developing talent	Policy on Staff Development	Training forum; Trade Unions under the chairpersonship of the Vice-Rector	2012	University 2: Institutional and Strategy 2013-2018; University 2: Institutional Plan 2012-2016; Performance management policy and strategy	Plan; policy; strategy
	Rules on the Skills Development of Support Staff within the Framework of the Policy on Staff Development	Chairpersons/Heads of division/line managers; Director: Employee Relations, Chief Director: Strategic Initiatives; Human Resources	2012		Rules
	Personal Development Plan		2011	University 2: Institutional Plan 2012-2016; Performance management policy and strategy	Plan; policy; strategy

Universities	Document name	Responsible for execution	Reviewed date	Refer to other documents	Type of document
Retaining talent	*			University 2: Institutional And Strategy 2013-2018; University 2: Institutional Plan 2012-2016	
Talent engagement	*				
Additional documents	University 2: Institutional Plan 2012-2016		2012		Plan
	University 2: Institutional And Strategy 2013-2018	Rector; Vice-chancellor; Senior Executive Leader	2013		Strategy
	Performance Management Policy and Strategy	University; faculty; support; service environment; department and division; individual	2011		Policy; strategy
	Checklist: adherence requirements for performance management		2011		Check-list

Universities	Document name	Responsible for execution	Reviewed date	Refer to other documents	Type of document
	A Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond		2000		Strategy
<b>University 3</b>					
Identifying talent	*				
Recruiting talent	*			Strategic Plan: The Vision, Mission and Plan of the University for 2025	Strategic plan
Developing talent	Human Resources Development Policy Regulation on the Funding of Employee Education, Training, and Development Needs.	Human resources Development Committee	2013	Strategic Plan: The Vision, Mission and Plan of the University for 2025	Strategic plan

Universities	Document name	Responsible for execution	Reviewed date	Refer to other documents	Type of document
	University 3: In-House Staff Development Programmes 2014		2014	Strategic Plan: The Vision, Mission and Plan of the University for 2025	Strategic plan
	University 3: Staff Development Portfolio	Line manager	2014	Strategic Plan: The Vision, Mission and Plan of the University for 2025	Portfolio; Strategic plan;
Retaining talent	*			Strategic Plan: The Vision, Mission and Plan of the University for 2025	
Talent Engagement	*				
Additional documents	Strategic Plan: The Vision, Mission and Plan of the University for 2025		2011		Strategic plan

\* No policy or single descriptive document of the process was available.

Table 2 above presents all the relevant policies, procedures, and documents provided by the different universities. This gives an indication of the documents they use when referring to talent management.

*University 1* utilises the following: a recruitment policy, academic staff promotion policy, training and development policy, leadership and management academy business plan, performance management policy and an institutional plan. Furthermore, the university also uses an employment equity plan to manage its talented employees.

*University 2* uses the following: a policy on staff development, rules on the skills development of support staff, personal development plans, institutional plans, performance management policies and strategies, and a checklist for performance management strategic frameworks.

According to the above-mentioned universities, these documents were used to identify, recruit, develop and retain talented employees.

*University 3* follows their Development Policy Regulation for Human Resources. This includes the following aspects: the funding of employees' education, training, and developmental needs; in-house staff development programmes; staff development portfolio; and strategic plans. These mentioned aspects were indicated as part of their talent management policies and procedures. This university provided the researcher with the documents they use to recruit, develop and retain employees, but could not provide any documentation for identifying talented employees.

None of the universities above were able to provide a single, concrete comprehensive policy or procedure for the full talent management process within their university.

### **Talent management champions**

In order to understand how the talent management programmes are executed in these South African universities the present study tried to establish which staff member is responsible for driving the talent management programme at each of the participating universities. The

universities were asked to identify these officials within their specific institution. During the interviews the following staff members were pointed out as talent-management champions:

- University 1 stated that talent management comes from “... *institutional management* ... and then the ... *Director Human Capital Development* ...” implements it.
- University 2 pointed out that “... *HR plays a few important roles* ...” of which one role includes the responsibility to ensure effective execution of talent management.
- University 2 also explained that the Vice Rector is responsible for talent management in general and the Vice Rector is also “... *responsible for... Human Resource Development* ...” It appeared that the Vice Rector were the champion but Human Resources (HR) are responsible for executing the talent management process.
- University 3 indicated that the responsibility of talent management lies with “... *Human Resources* ...”.

Based on the interviews, the responsibility for talent management is shared by various stakeholders with the emphasis on top management and the Human Resources Department to champion the talent management process.

### **Identifying talent**

One of the first processes listed for talent management in the present research was the identification of talented employees. The universities were asked to indicate the criteria they use for identifying talent within the university.

- University 1 indicated that “... *the line managers nominate potential talent* ... and we ask other employees to nominate themselves ...”
- University 2 mentioned the following criteria: “... *they must have subject knowledge* ... *their attitude is extremely important, positive attitude* ... *people that have a passion for what they do... talent never seem to be working, they seem to have fun* ... *they get excited when the work pressure is on* ... *they want that pressure* ... *they do not accept the status quo* ... *they like to question why things are happening and how you can improve that.*”..
- University 3 also identified talent as “... *a subject specific knowledgeable person* ...”.

Based on the information obtained from the interviews it can be inferred that the individuals responsible for driving talent management (i.e. ‘talent management champions’) each have their own framework for identifying an individual as a talented employee. A central theme that emerged from the interviews is the shared notion that individuals with talent are those with specific knowledge in their area of expertise. Based on the relevant documents the data indicates that none of the universities had a single formal policy, procedure, programme, or document in place as part of a comprehensive talent management programme for identifying talent.

It appeared that University 1 refers to a talented employee in their employment equity plan. This equity plan indicates: *“The identification, development and utilisation of persons that will make a relevant contribution to the realisation of the vision and goals of the University”*.. On the other hand, University 2 and 3 did not refer to the identification of talented employees in any of their documents.

Based on the responses (as discussed above), it can be inferred that all three universities have their own way of identifying talent within their institution. It also appears that the criteria for identifying talent within the university focus mainly on academics and not necessary on support staff.

### **Attracting and recruiting talent**

The second process in the talent management programme identified for the present research is recruitment of talented employees. During the interviews it was clear that both University 1 and 3 made use of a headhunting strategy to recruit their talent. In particular University 1 acknowledged that they *“... head hunt people to attract them to come and work at the University ... especially from a different university ...”* University 3 also stated that they *“... cannot inbreed ...”* which implies that they do only rely on talent within the university, but also recruit talent from other universities.

However, based on the document analysis it seems as if only one university has a formal policy for recruiting talent. University 1 considers the following approach when recruiting talented employees:

*“The needs in the specific environment where the vacancy exists ... the availability of suitable candidates with the required knowledge, skills, attributes, qualifications and/or registrations, experience or, where applicable sufficient potential ... no candidate shall be excluded based purely on a lack of experience.”*

University 1 also indicated that they recruit talent through the printed media since they ... *place an ad in the newspaper ...* They also acknowledge that they use headhunting:

*“Headhunting is if they advertise for a specific position and they re-advertise again and they don’t find someone ... and re-advertise ... and they go to an external headhunting company like a external recruiter ... for that specific candidate.”*

University 2 emphasises the recruitment of talented employees in their institutional plan and they attempt to “... *undertake directed strategic recruitment to attract and retain the best expertise.*” However, there were no documents in place to indicate or explain how the talent managers would undertake their strategic recruitment plan.

University 3 uses their strategic plan for: “... *attracting highly skilled, research oriented, academics ... and ... active recruitment of academic staff through a range of national, regional, and international networks ...*”

Based on the findings above it is evident that the majority of the participants have not spent much time planning or implementing a comprehensive policy, or procedure or process for attracting talented employees, even though they consider it a high priority in their strategic and institutional plans.

### **Developing talent**

The third activity in the talent management process entails developing talented employees. During the interviews, the participants were asked to indicate how they develop their talented employees. The results were as follows:

University 1 offered their employees the following incentives:

*“... study benefits ... so any employee can study at the University for free. If you are support staff you can actually study through another university and it is paid for, and then we also have the skills fund which we use for your skills training ... related to the job within the University ...”*

University 2 also confirmed that they provide talented employees with ... *financial and other resources* ... It seems as if this university also contribute to the development of their talented employees by spending an amount of time to “... *meet with them ... find out what their needs are ...*”

The participant from University 3 stated that they provided the following:

*“... fifty-eight different programmes that is available for staff members once they are appointed. That is for attending programmes; then each academic and support staff member will automatically be either on a mentoring programme for academia, or a coaching programme for support staff members ...”*

University 3 added that the performance management system is used to develop employees. However, this participant could not provide the researcher with a performance management policy, and instead indicated that the “... *coaching system is linked to the Performance Management system ...*”

Furthermore, the content was examined for policies and procedures to develop talent. The results indicate that all the universities have a form of policy or procedure, strategy or plan in place to develop their talented employees. The findings can be explicated as follows:

University 1 integrates their academic staff promotion policy with the development process of their talented employees. This staff promotion policy provides a framework for:

*“... career planning and development of academic staff as professionals are primarily the accountability of the individual staff member, but the organisation should create the environment and framework within which individual staff members can optimise their potential.”*

However, the data indicate that the policy was last reviewed in 2005, which makes it outdated. Furthermore, University 1 makes use of a training and development policy. It appears as if the policy was highly descriptive and includes fundamental guidelines such as the following:

*“... staff learning, training and development will be aligned with the University’s Performance Management systems and shall include the following; [1] job related skills development programmes; and [2] formal qualifications funded through the study rebate benefit ... managers are expected to discuss training and development needs with each of their employees at least annually as part of the Performance Appraisal and Planning process ... the University may grant financial assistance to employees to attend skills programmes which are occupationally based, accredited, and must be approved by their manager and be in line with personal development plans (PDP)...”*

It appears that University 1 also made use of leadership programmes to: *“... enhance leadership qualities of current and future leaders ... striving for continued excellence.”* This programme consists of mentoring, coaching, assessments as well as customised training seminars and workshops. It appears that the importance of training and development was incorporated in the employment equity plan: *“To provide a framework for institutional guidelines to attract, develop and retain competent, efficient, committed and motivated employees.”*

It is apparent from the results that University 2 also uses policies on staff development and personal development programmes. The staff development policy has the following procedure:

*“... staff development activities are controlled ... by the Training Forum, which is compiled of representatives of divisions concerned with training and development, as well as representatives of staff associations and trade unions under the chairpersonship of the Vice-Rector (Community Interaction and Personnel)... A training plan is submitted to the Training Forum... support is given to the departmental chairperson/head of division to identify training and development needs among ... staff on a continuous basis by way of his management mechanism and to nominate staff for participation in appropriate needs-directed development/training programmes ... staff are granted the right to nominate themselves for programmes ... the results of performance evaluation*

*are used with other methods and needs assessments to identify the training and development needs of staff ... ”*

It seems as if University 2 has clear and structured rules on the skills development of support staff. The importance of development is emphasised in the institutional and the performance management policy and strategy of the university. The institutional plans for instance focus on “... *satisfactory knowledge transfer and optimal use of mentorships.*” Furthermore, the aim is: “*Develop and implement Personal Development Plans for all permanent members of staff.*” The policy and strategy for performance management indicate that this university will strive to “... *establish and maintain a skills-based training system.*” For this university, the section dealing with training and development strategy in the Performance Management Policy and Strategy emphasises the following aspects:

*“[1] The definition of roles establishes a framework that spells out the required competencies for the role. It thus offers an opportunity to link specific development interventions to specific competencies and therefore leads to focused training of the staff. [2] Evaluation of competencies by different levels and environments of the University enables the University to create an integrated training and development strategy that is based on reliable management information. After every competency evaluation, the required development interventions are identified and this presents an opportunity for the more effective provision of development interventions.”*

University 3 evidently makes use of the policy regulation for human resource development on the funding of employees’ education, training, and development needs. The policy also elaborates on funding for the develop employees “... *each faculty or support services department ... decide on the funding of identified skills- and/or development programmes for ... staff members.*” Furthermore, it appeared that this university has an in-house staff development program. These in-house programmes vary from soft skills training and development to technical skills on specific matters. In addition, the university claims to make use of staff development portfolios:

*“... Staff Development Portfolio is to provide management guidelines on the staff development learning strategies and programmes available to staff members at the University ... to encourage and empower employees to align their personal goals and achievements with those of the University.”*

Finally, University 3 specified the development strategy in their strategic plan by showing support for the following profiles:

*“... developing ... highly skilled, research orientated, academics ... focus will be on: [1] supporting staff in obtaining doctoral or equivalent qualifications; and [2] developing a diverse and excellent cadre of young academics through succession planning, and by increasing the pool of doctoral graduates and postdoctoral fellows.”*

Based on the findings discussed above, it is evident that the development of talented employees has received extensive attention at all three participating universities. The results from the interviews seem to be substantiated by the documents provided by the different universities. In general, universities develop their talented employees by providing them with the following incentives and resources:

- learning, training and development programmes;
- funding their education, training, and development needs; and
- involving them with mentoring, coaching and leadership programmes.

Based on the findings, it appears that performance appraisals are mainly used to drive the development of talented employees within these universities. However, after in-depth examination of the documented data provided by the universities, it was clear that there were no policy or procedure available that are designed particularly to address the development of talented employees. Rather, all the policies and procedures on training and development seemed to reflect the development opportunities for all staff members of the respective universities.

### **Engaging and retaining talent**

During the interviews the researcher asked the participants to indicate how they retain their talented employees. The results are explicated below.

University 1 admitted that they do not have a “... retention strategy written out .. .but we do conduct exit interviews ... and based on that we can develop strategies or interventions.”

University 2 did not have any formal engagement or retention strategy in place. The participant merely stated: *“This must be a place where the young people wants to be ... the best young people of South Africa ... and ... we have this pool of young people that we bring into our university and we want to be known as the place for young people.”*

University 3 indicated: *“Our recruitment selection and promotion policy is actually the fundamental policy at the University to attract, to retain, and to develop staff members...”* Furthermore, the participant mentioned that they use a *“... development plan ...”*

It appears that none of the universities has a policy guiding the engagement and retention of talented employees. However, all the participants referred to talent retention in the different documents that they provided.

The recruitment policy’s objectives of University 1 states that the University aims to: *“... retain the best available employees, thereby ensuring quality, and sustainability of the University through its dependence on competent, efficient, committed, and motivated employees.”*

On the other hand, University 2 indicate in their institutional plan that the University should *“... retain scarce skills via the academic ...”* and *“... retain the best expertise ...”* It also seems as if this university focuses more on the importance of retention by indicating in the institutional strategy that the university should: *“... retain the best talent; accelerate diversity at senior staff levels via strategic recruitment; enhance the systemic linkage between academic and support service units; empower key University leaders to support the Institutional Strategy”*

The professed goal for the strategic plan of University 3 is to *... retain excellent academic and support staff.*

It is apparent from the results that the universities have not implemented a single, comprehensive descriptive policy, procedure, or activity to engage and retain their talented employees. The general motivation in the examined documents is that the best employees should be retained, but there are no supporting policies or procedures in place to drive the retention of talented employees.

## **Monitoring of the talent management programme**

The researcher's aim was to determine how the universities monitored their programmes for talent management. The reason was to establish that the process for talent management is being followed; also that mechanisms are in place to keep the responsible staff members within these universities liable for executing the policies and procedures aimed at creating and maintaining a talented workforce. Furthermore, the researcher wanted to ascertain whether the talent management programmes are active and effective. Therefore, the participants were asked how they monitor the talent management process. Based on the interviews the findings are presented and discussed below.

University 1 indicated that they knew their talent management process was being monitored since it was documented “... *in the institutional plan...*” Furthermore, the participant of this university indicated that they are monitoring their talent management programme by growing their “... *own timbers in the strategy ... every rector is responsible for monitoring ... every quarter IM receives a report ... it also go to sub-committee of the counsel ... every quarter we report on these for IM.*”.

It appeared that University 2 monitors their talent management process by making use of “... *staff plans ...*”. They also monitor the process “... *in terms of diversity ...*”. Diversity is clearly high on the agenda for this university. They monitor their talent management programme by linking it to their diversity levels. In other words, if they observe an increase in their diversity levels they consider the programme to be effective.

According to the participant University 3 employs a performance management system: “... *the performance management system is the largest single mechanism that the University use to measure a talent.*”.

Based on the findings above, it is clear that the monitoring process differs across universities. It appeared that the following methods are used to monitor talent:

- quarterly institutional management report reviews;
- staff plans;
- diversity as criterion;
- performance management systems.

### **Success of talent management**

Participants of the different universities were asked whether they consider their talent management processes as successful or not. The responses are explicated below.

The talent management plan of University 1 was implemented recently and is still in its early stages; therefore the success of the system could not be verified. However, at the time the interview was conducted, the participant attested that matters did go according to the management plan.

University 2 rated the success of their talent management process as 7 out of 10 since their staff turnover were very low.

The participant of University 3 asserted that talent management within their University is “... *very successful for ...positions that are not in the scarce skills. When is the scarce skills like your medical doctors, chartered accountants, and engineers? That is the difficult part.*”.

In general, it appears that all the universities were satisfied with the current status of their talent management programmes.

### **Challenges faced in talent management**

The participating universities were asked to identify the challenges they are facing in their talent management within the university. It became clear that universities did face, and are still encountering, numerous challenges.

University 1 attested to experiencing a problem with line managers, seeing that they failed to communicate when employees were nominated for the talent management programme. Line managers did not discuss the process with the nominated employees. As a result, these employees were uninformed about the process and where they fit in. Another challenge for this university is that: “... *line managers ... also not understanding the process and even though you assume you give them the guidelines they would understand ...*”. The participant also admitted:

*“... the lines are blurred as to who should be responsible for talent management ...without having a specialist that are already in place it becomes difficult because it may be seen as an extra responsibility for someone, and if the Director has no clue about what this is about, it will never take off.”*

From the interviews it can be concluded that University 2 faced challenges particularly regarding employees’ salaries:

*“The starting salary often is R500, 000 – R560, 000 a year. It should be higher ... we are competing with the industry to a large extent and specifically competing for the current Black and Indian students. They get job offers that we can’t match financially and then you lose them ... because they get five times the salary when they work in the industry so, why would they want to be in the academic field.”*

University 2 raised the following concern “... *some areas like engineering ... it are very difficult to attract Black talent and that is because of the problems we have in the secondary schools with maths education.*”.

The participant of University 3 concurred by explaining: “... *the challenge is your finances, your salaries. You cannot compete with the private sector ... in terms of development programmes, internal networking funds, you can manage that, but you cannot pay the salary.*”.

Overall the findings show that the challenges which universities face are their inability and lack of resources to remunerate talented employees in accordance with the high salaries paid in the private sector. Furthermore, due to a lack of high quality education within the

previously disadvantage school system, there may be a low delivery of Black, Coloured and Indian students that may have been potential talent recruits for the universities and could also contribute to transformation in these institutions. Below the results will be discussed.

## **Discussion**

In the discussion below, the specific objectives of the present study will be corroborated with the findings of the present research. The general objective of the present study was to investigate the current state of talent management policies and practices in South African universities from a *management perspective*. The study explored how policies and procedures were implemented and managed to identify, attract and recruit, as well as to develop, engage and retain talent in South African universities. The study aimed to determine whether talent management is performed as the universities intended.

After a detailed analysis of the findings, it was evident that individuals responsible for managing talent in these universities had their own and unique way of executing their talent management programme. Furthermore, individual participants had their own definition of the concept of talent management – a tendency that is confirmed by previous research (Meyers & Van Woerkom, 2014). This factor makes talent management an even more challenging process. Below follows a discussion on the manner in which universities in South Africa manage their talent. The discussion will focus mainly on the specific objectives of the present research study.

The *first specific objective* was to explore how talent management policies and procedures were conceptualised in the literature. Armstrong and Taylor (2014) posit that the talent management programme consist of policies and procedures to identify, attract and recruit, develop, engage and retain talent. These components according to the literature on talent management are explicated below:

- *Talent identification*: The process whereby ‘champions’ of talent management select the individuals who will form part of the talent pool (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

- *Attracting and recruiting:* The process of talent management is implemented in such a way that talent recruits are aligned with the right roles, at the right time within the right organisational culture (Ng, 2013; Phillips & Gully, 2015).
- *Talent development:* Is a plan of action that an organisation or institution has to plan, select and implement development strategies assisting talent recruits to improve their skills, knowledge and abilities, which allow them to show excellence in their current positions as well (McCauley & McCall Jr., 2014).
- *Talent engagement:* This entails policies and procedures as part of the talent management process, aimed at motivating talent recruits to ‘walk the extra mile’ (Rani & Reddy, 2015).
- *Talent retention:* The process whereby champions of talent management encourage and convince talent recruits to remain in the organisation (Naim, 2014).

The *second specific objective* was to determine whether South African universities have formal procedures, policies or programmes in place to drive talent management. In the present research it was found that universities clearly mentioned certain elements of the talent management process in their institutional plans and strategies. The findings indicated that universities definitely take note of talent management. As is the case with other institutions, universities strive to sustain a talented workforce and deliver quality work. However, the participating universities in the study failed to provide any concrete evidence of a comprehensive policy or procedure that were in place to drive talent management.

From the findings it became clear that documented institutional plans and strategies did indicate the need for talent management and that the universities should strive for a way to recruit, develop, and retain talented employees. However, these statements were formulated in general terms and did not refer to any comprehensive, implemented policy or procedure for talent management. This shortcoming remains a concern, since the huge challenge of globalisation, need for equity and competition with the private business sector for talent, necessitate that universities should be more creative in their planning and policies on this matter (Pienaar & Bester, 2008; Riccio, 2010).

The *third specific objective* was to identify from the individually chosen universities the staff member who champions their respective talent management processes. Beechler and Woodward (2009) posit that the responsibility of talent management reaches far beyond the

Human Resource Department. Based on the results of the present study the responsibility of talent management within universities mainly lies at top management level and the Human Resource Department. According to Vilkinas and Ladyshevsky (2014) senior leaders of universities are responsible to develop and review policies and procedures for talent management more accurately in order to deliver optimal outcomes. The findings of the present research have shown that two of the participating universities have appointed the Human Resource Department to champion the talent management programmes within the institution, and only one university has appointed the task to top management, which includes the Vice Chancellor.

The *forth specific objective* was to explore which policies and procedures were implemented to identify, attract and recruit, develop, as well as to engage and retain talent within South African universities. The findings are explicated below.

*Identify talent:* it was found that no policy or procedure was in place to create a framework for identifying a talented employee within the participating universities of South Africa. In this regard, previous research indicates that an individual with talent can be viewed as someone with knowledge and soft skills (Garavan *et al.*, 2012). Based on the interview results, universities identify individuals with talent as those knowledgeable about their field of study and a passion for their work and research.

Björkman *et al.* (2013) propose that performance appraisals should be used to identify talent with the applicable knowledge and skills. The results showed that only two of the three universities had a performance management document in place but there was no indication within the policy that an application is to identify talent. Therefore it can be assumed that these universities may use their performance management programs to identify talent, but since there is no evidence to substantiate this fact, it can be inferred that the universities at this stage do not have any policies in place to identify and manage talent.

*Attracting and recruiting talent:* The findings of the research indicated that universities place adverts in the newspapers to allow for applications from any candidate; furthermore they use headhunting companies. In this regard previous research reveals another method that universities use to recruit talent, namely national and international networks. Van Dijk (2008) suggests recruiting talent from diverse sources and to follow a strategic recruitment process

in order to find the right talent at the right time. The universities should firstly examine the needs for the specific environment where the vacancy is found. Literature also suggests that people and the roles they are going to fill should be aligned (Cunningham, 2007; Ng, 2013; Phillips & Gully, 2015). Secondly universities should explore whether the suitable candidates are available to recruit. These entail talent recruits with the required knowledge, skills, attributes, qualifications and experience or, where appropriate, sufficient potential. Van Dijk (2008) maintains that universities should be open-minded regarding recruitment of talented employees since these institutions have excellent students with scarce skills to enlist. To conclude, based on the findings, it is clear that only one university had a formal policy for talent recruitment in place.

*Developing talent:* Previous research indicates that universities use learning, training and development programmes to develop their talent recruits' technical and soft skills (Conger, 2010). The results of the study indicate that universities fund their employees' attendance of different courses, and furthermore involve them in mentoring, coaching, and leadership programmes. This is aligned to previous research that these types of programmes enable universities to grow a talented workforce (Coates & Goedegebuure, 2012).

Based on the interviews of the present study it was found that universities use their performance management systems to identify skill shortage that needs to be developed. However, it was evident that these universities in South Africa do not have separate policies or procedures in place to develop talent recruits. As a result, the universities participating in the present research refer to the ordinary development or performance management policies and procedures as means to develop their talented employees.

*Engaging and retaining talent:* It is worth noting from the findings that the selected universities do not have a strategy, policy or procedure in place to engage talented employees. Previous research by Talent Keepers (2015) has identified the following factors underlying the most successful engagement and retention strategies: (1) training and personal development; (2) compensation benefits; (3) organisational culture; (4) communication; (5) flexibility; (6) surveys; (7) coaching; (8) on-boarding; and (9) relationship building. In this regard Talent Keepers (2015) point out, however, that it is a concerning factor that organisations do not plan to develop and execute effective strategies, policies and procedures to promote retention.

The results of the present research indicated that the selected universities strive to engage and retain the best talented employees. The reason is that these institutions depend on capable, efficient, dedicated, and motivated employees, as attested by their documents. In addition, universities also need to keep track of diversity at senior staff levels. However, it was clear from the present study that universities do not spend sufficient time to develop a comprehensive process that they can follow in order to engage and retain their talented employees. Theron *et al.* (2014) point out the process that universities can use to engage and retain talent. This is, namely through strategic recruitment and improved systemic linkage between academic and support services. Management support, recognition and compensation will be certain factors encouraging talent recruits to remain within the university (Theron *et al.*, 2014). By empowering key university leaders to support the Institutional Strategy which included talent management processes, can ensure retention of employees. Nevertheless, Stahl *et al.* (2012) point out that there is no fixed method for retaining employees and, furthermore, no guarantees that employees will remain in the organisation.

The *fifth specific objective* was to examine how South African universities monitor the talent management process. Based on the results it is clear that universities monitor the managing of talent through institutional plans and by quarterly reports to the institutional management. Furthermore, the results indicated that talent management is monitored through records of performance management and through staff plans. Previous research emphasises the need to align HR information's systems with the talent management programmes. In addition, managers should be coached, which will enable them to monitor the talent management process (Knowledge Resources, 2015).

The *sixth specific objective* was to determine whether South African universities consider their talent management as successful. Based on the findings of the present research, the talent management champions indicated that they believe their respective talent management policies and procedures are managed successfully. However, further findings of this research study revealed that the participating universities were not able to provide a comprehensive documented programme for talent management. Therefore, even though these champions may consider their programmes successful it seems as if this is not the case in reality.

The *seventh specific objective* was to identify the challenges experienced by South African universities in the process of managing their talent. The participants were of the opinion that the universities' talent management programmes were successful and they believed they are on track with managing their talented employees. However, the findings show the reality is that these champions are facing numerous challenges. These challenges should first be addressed before the success of their talent management processes could be assessed. Based on the results and findings of recent literature, overall the relevant policies and procedures within universities are not in place (Theunnissen *et al.*, 2013). These challenges include the following:

- Line managers who do not communicate the talent management process.
- The disproportionate remuneration for talented employees. Research shows that individuals with a PhD would rather seek employment outside the university environment (Coates *et al.*, 2009).
- The inclusion of previously disadvantage groups within the talent pool. Due to a lack of high quality education within their school system there may be a low delivery of Black, Coloured and Indian students as potential talent for the University, which could also contribute to transformation targets.

## Practical implications

The practical implication of the present study is the identification of policies and procedures that are critical for an effective talent management programme in South African universities (Scullion & Collings, 2011; Stahl *et al.*, 2012). The status quo on this matter in some South African universities is still unclear. In order for universities to engage and retain their talented employees a reliable in-house talent management programme should be followed. This will guide the universities to implement the various components of the talent management process, as was identified above (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). Universities should be the leaders in educating students on the need for talent management; however, it seems as if they do not practice what they preach (Lynch, 2007). The present study is thus of value to the talent management champions who are responsible to execute an effective talent management programme. In the final analysis, the present study contributes to the practice of Human Resource Management by emphasising the importance of having policies and procedures in place to manage talent within South Africa universities effectively.

## Limitations and recommendations

Various limitations can be pointed out that influenced the present research study. The first limitation was the design and method. Although this research provided promising results and positive methodological strengths, a few limitations should be mentioned regarding the sample. The sample included only three South African universities. The fourth university that were willing to participate in the research did not have a talent management programme in place. The ideal would have been to study this phenomenon across all the South African universities. However, such a research would have been time-consuming and costly, and due to a lack of resources this approach was not possible. Therefore it is suggested that future research should include more universities in the sample in order to reach comprehensive generalizability.

Furthermore, the subjective experiences of talent management influenced the trustworthiness of the data. The individuals responsible for managing talent within the universities gave their subjective opinion on the status of talent management, which did not necessarily reflect the strategy, policies and procedures that actually were in place. Thus, it is highly recommended

that the researcher first benchmark the definition of talent management within the universities of South Africa. This would allow for a better understanding and implementation of the strategies, policies and procedures in this regard.

### **Recommendations for the practice of Human Recourse Management**

Of interest would be the managers' own definition of talent. Researchers are advised to include line managers in future studies to ensure that the subjective opinions of the people responsible for managing talent within the university reflect the actual status quo. Further studies is recommended focusing particularly on addressing the challenge of benchmarking as mentioned above, and other challenges for talent management programmes within the universities of South Africa.

It is recommended that other organisations, especially universities, in South Africa, review their current status quo on policies and procedures of talent management. The talent management programmes could be more effective if the necessary mechanisms were in place. Universities should be extremely concerned about the absence of an established, comprehensive talent management programme in their institution. Most organisations have identified talent management as one of the three major challenges with regard to the managing of human capital. Currently, South African universities face a similar situation. Therefore it will be of the utmost importance to consult specialists in this field to develop an effective talent management programme that will be an investment for long-term returns.

### **Conclusions**

Talent management has become a crucial managerial responsibility since the beginning of the 21st century. Universities will not be globally competitive if they do not follow a successfully implemented programme for talent management. However, before such a programme can be followed the necessary talent-related policies and procedures need to be in place. The process of talent management should be initiated through top management and the HR functions and furthermore communicated throughout the university from academics to support staff. The risk of not being pro-active with talent management can lead to a major loss in skills and knowledge, which will hinder the university in achieving its goals.

The present study is relevant in that it indicates a way of dealing effectively with the challenges of talent management within the universities of South Africa. The present research has reported on the extrapolative value of talent management for organisations but especially universities. In this sense, this study has also contributed to the existing research on human resource management by providing increased insight into the manner in which talent is managed within universities in South Africa. These research findings will be beneficial to organisations and universities of South Africa since organisations need talented employees to maintain their competitive edge in the industry.

The present research will help universities to re-conceptualise their programmes to manage their talent and determine how their talent management compare to the benchmark that has been set. This research study will also help universities to understand the importance of talent management policies, procedures and applicable strategies or activities relating to management and the benefits it deliver. Universities can use the finding of this study as a guideline to develop interventions and strategies to improve and possibly re-structure their existing talent management policies and practices.

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**CHAPTER 3**

**RESEARCH ARTICLE 2**

# TALENT RECRUITS' NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

## ABSTRACT

**Orientation:** The demand for talented employees within universities is expected to increase. Universities should invest in fulfilling the needs and expectations of talent recruits' in order to sustain a talented workforce.

**Research purpose:** The aim of the present study was to review the needs and expectations of talent recruits within selected universities in South Africa.

**Motivation for the study:** Talented employees' skills and knowledge are valued for continuous learning. Losing a talent recruit will negatively affect the university's ability to compete globally. Universities should investigate the needs and expectations of their talent recruits as that such an understanding can lead to managerial programmes that encourage higher engagement levels, performance and retention.

**Research design, approach and method:** A phenomenological qualitative research design was used with snowball sampling of participants in the present research study ( $n = 31$ ). Participants were talent recruits of three well-known universities in South Africa ( $N= 3$ ). These recruits were identified by the people responsible for the talent management (i.e. talent management champions). Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were used to gather data, which were transcribed and analysed by means of a thematic content analysis.

**Main findings:** The findings of the research indicated that talent recruits have various needs and expectations. These include: training and development, identification of developmental areas, support, autonomy and mentoring provided. In addition, the recruits focus their expectation on performance, feedback, rewards, the opportunity for career planning, as well as the clarification of their needs and expectations. They also have the need to identify their strengths, reduced specified workload, clear goal setting, not being micro-managed and opportunities to apply their skills. Recruits prioritise encouragement, time to prepare for the job, realistic expectations of promotion, recognition, structure in their work setting and the opportunity to work within areas of strengths.

**Practical/managerial implications:** Universities are well advised to pay attention to the needs and expectations of their talent recruits. Furthermore, such institutions should adjust their talent management programmes to attract and satisfy these recruits.

**Contribution:** The study helps to add to the limited research undertaken in managing talent recruits from different job levels and positions in selected South African universities. The research proposed a benchmark for complying with talent recruits' needs and expectations for a future career in a tertiary environment. Therefore, universities can use this benchmark to compare their current programmes, strategies, policies, procedures, or activities of talent management, and adjust accordingly.

**Keywords:** Talent management, talent recruits, universities, needs and expectations, South Africa

## **Introduction**

The world and its dynamic workforce are continually changing. In addition, the global economy has created a competitive environment in which most organisations have to function if they want to show sustainable growth (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). Organisations have become conscious of the fact that talent is of strategic importance if they want to survive in the competitive global economy (Tiwari, 2015). There is currently a war for talent raging, and the weapon in the human resources arsenal seems to be talent management (Sheokand & Verma, 2015). Organisations function in a dynamic and competitive environment and the majority of enterprises find it challenging to manage talented employees (Farndale, Scullion & Sparrow, 2010). Managing talented individuals are critical since these recruits are considered as the key employees and key drivers that will support the organisation's objectives in future (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Iles, Chuai & Preece, 2010; Sheokand & Verma, 2015).

As is the case with most organisations, universities are also faced with the similar challenge to survive in dynamic, complex, and highly competitive global environments (Van der Brink, Fruytier & Theunissen, 2013). A country's global competitiveness and growth of the knowledge community depend on a strong and sustainable higher educational sector (Barkhuizen, Mogwere & Schutte, 2014). Without talented employees who are highly qualified and devoted, no university can ensure sustainability and excellence over the long term (Pienaar & Bester, 2008). However, the reality is that South African universities are at a serious risk of losing their mature, knowledgeable employees due to, among other things, the aging of the workforce. Research indicated that more than 1 430 professors and associate professors would reach their retirement age in 10 years' time (Govender, 2014).

Retirement is not the only reason why universities are losing their talented workforce. Other contributing factors are the absence of an appreciation for learning and the strenuous working climate (Govaerts, Kyndt, Dochy & Baert, 2011). Talent management processes were brought to the attention of the universities because of the high turnover rates and the results of a poor job fit within current positions (Smith, 2014). Sparrow, Hird and Cooper (2015) point out that experts are currently faced with challenges such as role design, ownership and return on investment where talent management is concerned.

In addition, South African universities are also confronted with transformation, from both the perspective of students and staffing. As a result, South African universities need to balance dual agendas of being a globally competitive institution and at the same time a nationally represented resource (Higher Education South Africa, 2011). Therefore it seems as if diversity is also a challenge for universities in South Africa. Without a diverse workforce, institutions will not enjoy the full advantage of various opportunities and furthermore, they will not be able to generate a powerful talent pipeline to provide the next generations of global leaders (Hunt, Layton & Prince, 2014).

Universities are aware of talent management challenges but only limited interventions are implemented to address these challenges (HESA, 2011; Riccio, 2010; Theron, Barkhuizen & Du Plessis, 2014). Furthermore, only limited strategies, policies and procedures are in place to support such a process of talent management (Vaiman & Collings, 2013). Therefore the success of these processes within selected universities in South Africa can be questioned (Liversage, 2015).

In order to ensure that talented employees are engaged and want to remain within universities, it is of the utmost importance that the needs and expectations of talent employees are investigated and dealt with. Tiwari (2015) states that, if talented employees' needs and expectations were to be considered, they would feel more engaged toward the responsibilities and accountabilities of their daily work. Based on research by Tiwari (2015), and in the light of challenges and concerns raised by HESA (2011) on talent management in South African universities, it has become a serious issue whether talent management programmes in South African universities are in line with the actual needs and expectations of talented employees.

Currently the status quo of talented employee's needs and expectations are unclear (McDonnel, 2011). This might also be the case in South African universities since previous research has not investigated the talented employees' needs and expectations from talent management programmes of their universities. It is particularly important to investigate and understand the inner motivation of talented employees from their point of view. The reason is that talented employees' needs and expectations may differ. In addition, universities may provide their talented employees with a form of support, whereas this employee may have a different need or expectation (McDonnel, 2011). These inner motivators can include the

following aspects: flexible working hours, interpersonal relationships, and job security (Samuel & Chipunza, 2013). Gaining an understanding of talented employees priorities (i.e. needs and expectations), could lead to higher success in the development, engagement, and retention of talent (Lockwood, 2006; Tiwari, 2015). If talent recruits priorities and preferences are met, it can be expected that they will be more content and satisfied with their work and work environment. As a result they may consider remaining with the university (Farndale, Pai, Sparrow & Scullion, 2014; Martins, 2014).

## Research purpose and objectives

### **General objective**

Firstly the general objective of the present research article was to examine talent recruits' needs and expectations of talent management programmes in South African universities.

### **Specific objectives**

The primary objective flows logically into specific objectives as presented below:

- To determine whether talent recruits are aware of being identified as talented individuals and to explore their opinions on the identification of talent.
- To identify the recruits' needs and expectations of talent management programmes in South African universities.
- To explore the implications if talent recruits' needs and expectations are not met.
- To formulate recommendations based on the findings of this research.

The research study consists of the following components: a literature review, empirical study, discussion, limitations, and recommendations. These components will be discussed in more detail below.

## Literature review

The applicable themes on talent recruits' needs and expectations captured from the literature are presented and discussed below.

### **Conceptualising talent**

The criteria typically used to describe a talented person are highly complex, seeing that research does not provide a definite definition for talented employees. Moreover, talent depend on the type of organisation, competitive environment and even the sector in which the talented employee functions (Sheokand & Verma, 2015).

Managers have subjective information about employees and make their decision on an employee 'talent' that is based on their subjective point of view (Mäkelä, Björkman & Ehnrooth, 2010; Vaiman, Scullion & Collings, 2012). Previous research has indicated that organisations are uncertain whether people are born with talent or if talent within an employee can be developed (Cohn, Khurana & Reeves, 2005). Organisations that define talent as a set of knowledge, skills and abilities, believe that talent can be acquired (Meyers & Van Woerkom, 2014). Organisations that define talent in personality, characteristics, emotional intelligence or motivations are more likely to consider that talent is inborn or by nature (Silzer & Church, 2009). There is a stark difference in opinion on a talented person, and on the question of where the focus of organisations should be in the management of talented individuals. This lack of consensus led to insufficient knowledge of or skills by which to manage talent in organisations (Wahyuningtyas, 2015).

For the purpose of the present research a talented employee, high-flyer, high potential or rising star will be referred to as a 'talent recruit'.

Ready, Conger and Hill (2010) identify the core elements of the anatomy of a talent recruit. Firstly, somebody with talent is viewed as an individual who delivers strong results (Sheokand & Verma, 2015). Talent recruits build confidence and trust among their colleagues. They exert an influence on the stakeholders. Secondly, talent recruits are people who master new types of expertise (Davies & Davies, 2010) and they are noticed because

they are efficient in their work and fulfil the technical job requirements (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Thirdly, talent recruits focus on being excellent in specific job elements. They are seen as employees who understand that behaviour counts, therefore these recruit's conduct keep them 'on the radar' (Bhatnagar, 2008; Schiemann, 2014).

Clear characteristics of such a recruit is to be trustworthy, influencing other people and engaging with colleagues (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2014). Talent recruits motivate peer workers and have an impressive strategic vision and help others to succeed (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2007). These 'high-flyers' are usually identified by excelling in performance in comparison to colleagues. Collings and Mellahi (2009), highlight factors such as commitment and motivation with regard to talent identification. Ulrich and Ulrich (2010) propose the 3Cs: "*talent = competence × commitment × contribution*". Lastly such recruits embrace the organisation's culture and values (Bhatnagar, 2008; Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2014; Schiemann, 2014).

To conclude on the concept of talent, the following definition of Schiemann (2014) will be used to describe a talent recruit: "Talent is the collective knowledge, skills, abilities, experiences, values, habits and behaviours of all labour that is brought to bear on the organization's mission."

### **Talent identification**

Organisations are faced with the dilemma of whether to inform the outstanding employees that they are seen as talent. It is believed that certain talent recruits do not wish to know their talent status, whereas other recruits would prefer to have it known (Evans, Pucik & Björkman, 2010). The long-term implications of talent identification should not be taken lightly because notifying talent recruits who wish their talent status to be undisclosed may result in negative attitudes. Managers should take note that employees may have different reactions with regard to talent identification.

Talent identification can become a sensitive matter for two contrasting reasons:

1. If employees do not know the organisation identified them as talent employees, they may possibly feel undervalued and frustrated.

2. If employees are publicly notified that they are viewed as talented it might result in disengagement for those employees who are not identified as such (Björkman, Ehrnrooth, Mäkelä, Smale & Sumelius, 2013).

Talent recruits can be identified through various methods such as performance assessments, psychometric testing, professional development plans, 360-degree feedback, knowledge assessments and talent reviews (Björkman *et al.*, 2013).

Regarding the communication of talent management programmes, the best way is considered to inform a talent recruit up front that he/she forms part of the talent pool (Kinley & Ben-Hur, 2013). Talent recruits seem to become aware of their talent status by being informed either through management or by self-observation. Janson (2015) points out that talent recruits become aware of the fact that they are viewed as talent when management informs them that they form part of the bigger picture in the organisation. However, Janson also warns that this specific conversation with a talent recruit may cause the recruit to demand more mentoring and coaching from superiors, more feedback and input on performances, as well as growth opportunities and fair compensation (Janson, 2015). Another method through which talent recruits become aware of their status is by comparing themselves with other employees (Gelens, Dries, Hofmans & Pepermans, 2013).

Björkman *et al.* (2013) and Farndale *et al.* (2010) discovered that individuals who notice that they are viewed as a talent employee are more likely to identify with their organisation than those who are not identified as such. In addition, the individuals who are validated as talent by their organisations are more committed to increase their performance and are encouraged to build competencies that are valuable for the organisation (Björkman *et al.*, 2013; CIPD, 2009). To overcome the challenge of talent identification as discussed above, organisations should develop innovative ways to introduce such identification among employees (Beechler & Woodward, 2009).

Overall it is uncertain how talent recruits are informed of their new status and, furthermore, it is unclear how these recruits feel about such identification. This matter was not the priority of previous research thus far. Therefore the first objective of the present research study was to determine how South African universities inform their talent recruits that they are viewed as such, and secondly to determine whether talent recruits in selected universities of South

Africa wishes to be informed that they are considered as such – as seen from their point of view.

Apart from determining whether employees have the need to be notified formally that they are seen as talent, organisations should familiarise themselves with these talent recruits' needs and expectations.

### **Needs and expectations of talent recruits**

The core elements of a talent management process include activities such as the identification, recruitment and development, as well as engagement and retention of talented employees (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Gaspersz, 2013). For the talent management process to be successful and deliver desired results, particularly by engaging and retaining these talented employees, it is crucial that the needs and expectations of the talent recruits themselves are met. These individuals have the luxury of 'shopping around' because of the contributing factors they bring to any organisation. In addition, competitors are fighting in the 'talent war' to source the best talent in the market (Kaye & Jordan-Evans, 2014). If management responds to what these recruits need and expect of the organisation, it would make them feel encouraged and recognised (Sheokand & Verma, 2015).

Employee's needs and expectations have been researched over the years. Herzberg's (1959) *two-factor theory* reveals that employees are interested in internal values more than external values when it comes to work (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1993). The internal values entail the following intangible qualities: motivation, achievement, responsibility, recognition, and growth. In contrast, external values include tangible aspects such as salaries, policies and procedures, management styles, or the work environment (Baron & Armstrong, 2007).

The *equity theory* (Adams, 1965) indicates that people frame a perception of how they are treated in comparison with other people. Based on this comparison the employee will put in effort to perform his/her job. This effort may be translated into education, experience, commitment, time, and the employee expects to be compensated for it in remuneration, recognition and promotion (Beardwell & Claydon, 2007; Björkman *et al.*, 2013). The equity theory presupposes that employees have the need to be part of a larger system.

The notion of *employee value proposition* can also be taken in consideration. In other words, this is the case where employees may ask: “What is in it for me?” (Browne, 2012). Minchington (2006) defines employee value proposition (EVP) as a set of recommendations and offerings provided by an organisation in return for the skills, competencies and experiences, which an employee brings to the organisation, which means that the employee becomes part of the larger system.

Finally, the *expectancy theory* of Vroom (1964) investigates the cognitive process through which employees will be motivated to act in a specific way due to results expected from this particular behaviour. In other words, the employee is motivated to behave in a certain way to achieve a desirable outcome (Daly & Dee, 2006; Wahyuningtyas, 2015).

Previous research provides solid groundwork on needs and expectations of individuals (Smith, 2014; Tiwari, 2015). In the context of talent management, the theories mentioned above may contribute to the effective designing and execution of policies and procedures for talent management, which addresses the needs and expectations of talent recruits. However, it is important to understand that previous research also indicated that general employees and talent recruits also have additional needs and expectations of managers.

Talent recruits’ needs and expectations require that managers show strong leadership qualities (Tiwari, 2015). Talent recruits expected from their manager (the following inputs): to inform them when decisions are to be made and face-to-face interaction with their leaders (Talent Keepers, 2015). These recruits, furthermore, have the need for flexibility, challenging tasks and constant motivational support from their managers. They expect to be provided clear value propositions, rewards and recognition for the tasks they accomplish. Further needs include: compensation benefits, adequate communication, coaching, relationship building and working in an outstanding organisational culture. This should be accompanied by customised learning and regular development programmes (Knowledge Resources, 2015; Sheokand & Verma, 2015; Talent Keepers, 2015; Tiwari, 2015). In light of these expectations, organisations that provide flexibility, customised learning and development programmes, are less likely to lose their talent, compared to those organisations that do not provide these opportunities (Knowledge Resources, 2015). It appears from previous research that there is an alignment between employees general needs and expectations and those of talent recruits, however, the latter clearly have additional needs.

The focus of top management and leaders should be to address these needs and expectations and to develop the outstanding employees through continuous learning and opportunities for career growth. By investigating in a talented employee's specific needs, managers can ensure higher engagement and retention (Hong, Hao, Kumar, Ramendran, & Kadiresan 2012; Tiwari, 2015). Therefore the correct identification and management of these talented employee passions and preferences may be vital for the sustainability of the organisation.

### **Talent engagement and retention**

Organisations are constantly reminded on how crucial it is to engage and retain talent recruits' from different demographical backgrounds, with different levels of skills, knowledge and abilities in order to improve work performance (Hong *et al.*, 2012; Van der Brink *et al.*, 2013). When organisations continue to achieve high levels of employee engagement it will keep customers loyal and heighten the value for stakeholders, which will also lead to a competitive advantage in the industry (Taneja, Sewell & Odom, 2015). Talent Keepers (2015) discovered that 82% of organisations consider talent engagement a top priority.

- *Engagement* refers to the concept of keeping talented employees involved, which is defined crudely as 'going the extra mile' and showing positive corporate citizenship behaviour (Rani & Reddy, 2015).
- *Retention* entails policies and procedures companies use to prevent highly talented employees from leaving their occupation. This involves measures that encourage employees to remain within the organisation (Naim, 2014).

As is the case for any organisation, talent engagement and retention is also critical for universities. According to Burke, Koyuncu, Fiksenbaum & Yasemin (2013) effective policies and procedures of human resource management that include the programme dealing with talent can increase employee engagement. This, in turn, could improve the quality of services rendered to clients as well as the overall performance of the institution (i.e. university in this case). Research shows that policies and procedures to manage talent recruits are applied ineffectively, particularly with regard to managing engagement and retention. Therefore,

there seems to be various indicators that will aid the engagement and retention of talent recruits in the universities of South Africa (Barkhuizen *et al.*, 2014a; Theron *et al.*, 2014).

These indicators were investigated by various researchers and are illustrated in Figure 1 below (Takawira, Coetzee & Schreuder, 2014; Theron *et al.*, 2014).

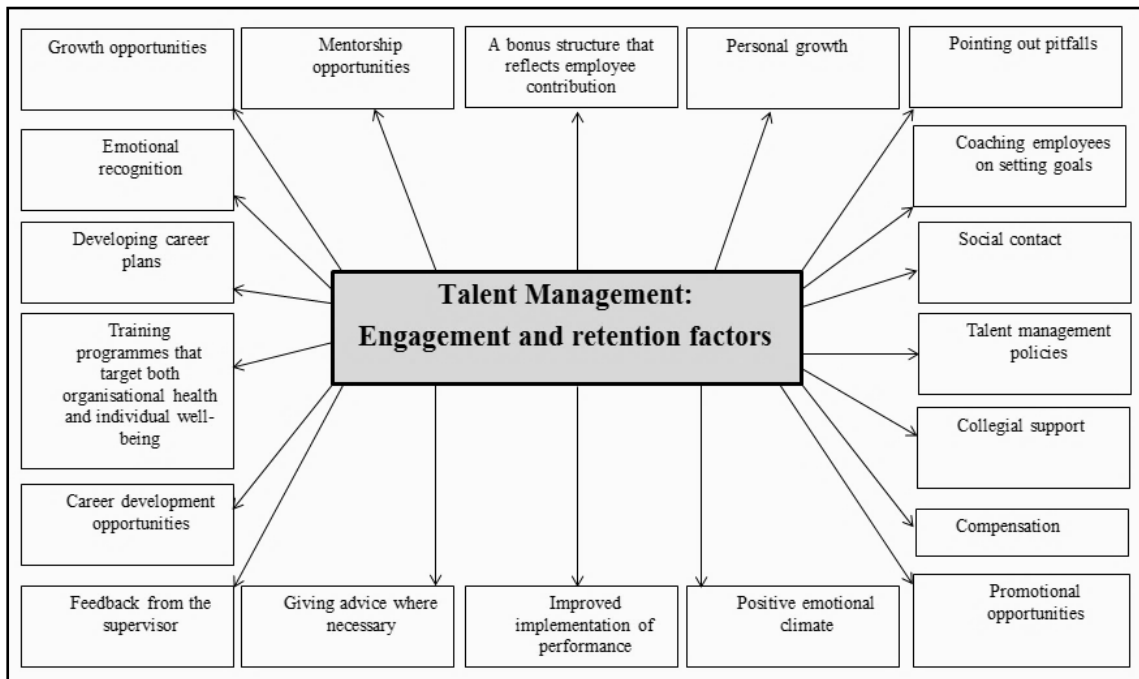


Figure 1  
*Talent engagement and retention factors*

**Source:** Researcher’s own compilation.

Based on the depiction in Figure 1 it is clear that previous research explored these factors regarding talent: needs, expectations, engagement and retention. However, only a few studies focus on the needs and expectations of talent recruits within South African universities. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to explore, from an interpretive perspective, what talent recruits need and expect from the staff members responsible for managing their talent, within South African universities.

## **Research design**

The research design comprised the following components research approach. The research strategy chosen and the method applied.

### Research approach

A qualitative research approach was followed in the present research study. Qualitative research is a social or behavioural science that explores human behaviour (Kreuger & Neuman, 2005). In this case the research focused on the needs and expectations of talent recruits within South African universities.

The research study explored the research objectives is in accordance with the interpretative paradigm. Gray (2014) points out that the interpretive approach does not search for common facts but emphasises the subjective perceptions of the participant's point of view. This paradigm allows participants to construct knowledge about their subjective perceptions (Gray, 2014). Therefore it may be that talent recruits' in the interviews projected their own meaning and reality of their needs and expectations.

Furthermore, a phenomenological case study approach was followed. According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2011), a phenomenological case study method is useful for connecting with the participant's life background in a natural way. The researcher held discussions with several participants who were involved in the phenomenon (De Vos *et al.*, 2011). It is important to understand talent recruits needs and expectations within South African universities by conducting the study from the recruits' point of view. The goal was to construct a framework from ideas and insights formulated while exploring these recruits' needs and expectations within the setting of South Africa universities.

### Research strategy

A case study strategy was selected for this research. A case study relies on more than one source of evidence to synthesise the richness of data and turning it into useful information (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, a case study can be described as an investigation of a single

source, or multiple sources, of evidence (Creswell, 2007). For the purpose of the present research, a multiple case study was used since more than one South African University was investigated. A case study strategy is sufficient for this research study, as that this strategy facilitated the transmission of the multiple recruits' experiences, and gave the researcher insight into the cases under investigation (Gray, 2014; Wagner, Kawulich & Garner, 2012). The unit of analyses for the sample was restricted to individuals whom their universities identified as talent recruits.

## Research method

The research method consisted of basic aspects such as the research setting as well as the entrée and establishing of researcher roles. The discussion of the method also includes sampling, the research procedure, data-collection method, data recording, and the strategies employed to ensure data quality and integrity. This is followed by the ethical considerations, data analysis and reporting style.

### **Research setting**

The interviews were conducted in the environment of the three participating South Africa universities. All the participants were interviewed in their room of choice. The interviews took place behind closed doors, and a 'do not disturb' sign was posted to avoid possible interruptions. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006) emphasise the physical environment and research setting, which can influence the outcome of the results. Therefore, the researcher made sure that the participants were comfortable in their environment before starting with the interviews.

### **Entrée and establishing researcher role**

The research was done in an unbiased and neutral way to avoid the researcher from personally influencing the results (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006). Firstly, the participating universities were consulted to get ethical approval before the research project continued. Secondly, permission was granted by the staff member primarily responsible for driving talent management within the university (i.e. talent management champion) to get the

participants' names. Finally, the participants who were referred by the talent management champion were asked for their approval to take part in this study. Regarding the role occupation, the researcher acted as an interviewer, facilitator, listener and transcriber (Creswell, 2009).

## **Sampling**

Six of the largest universities in South Africa were contacted to take part in the research study, of which four universities replied to the invitation. However, one of the four universities indicated that they have not implemented a talent management programme and could not participate in the study. Therefore, only three universities participated ( $N = 3$ ). At each of the participating universities, the talent management champion was asked to refer individuals identified as talent within the university, and who were participating in the talent management programme of the university.

In other words, a strategy of voluntary snowball sampling was followed to select the participants. When the sampling frame is unknown and there is limited access to the participants, snowball sampling is seen as the appropriated method (Creswell, 2009; Wagner et al, 2012). The sample for the present research study was compiled as follows:

- University 1 – sixteen recruits 1 ( $n = 16$ );
- University 2 – only six ( $n = 6$ ) recruits available;
- University 3 – nine ( $n = 9$ ) recruits

The participants were selected from various faculties at different job levels (i.e. both academic and support staff, from junior level to top management). If an individual was included in the university's talent pool he or she was considered for the present study, regardless of the job title or level. This allowed the researcher a general overview of talent recruits' particular needs and expectations from their universities ( $n = 31$ ). The profile of the participants are presented in Table 2.1 below.

Table 1

*Profile of participants (n = 31)*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	19	61.29
	Female	12	38.71
Ethnicity	Asian	2	6.45
	Black	4	12.90
	Coloured	5	16.13
	White	20	64.52
Language	Afrikaans	21	67.74
	English	5	16.13
	Multi-Lingual	2	6.45
	Sotho	1	3.23
	Tswana	1	3.23
	Xhosa	1	3.23
Age	25-35	8	25.81
	36-45	9	29.03
	46-55	10	32.25
	56-65	4	12.90
Qualification	Postgraduate degree (Honours, Master's or Doctorate)	23	74.19
	University degree	6	18.75
	Grade 12	2	6.45

Based on the table above, it is clear that the majority of the participants were male (61.29%), and 38.71% female. Most of the participants were White (64.52%) and the minority of them were Asian (6.45%). The second most participants were Coloured (16.13%), and only four (12.90%) Black participants participated in this research study.

Most of the participants were Afrikaans speaking (67.47%) and only five individuals (16.13%) were English speaking. Two participants (6.45%) were bi-lingual (able to speak

English and Afrikaans) and there was only one participant (3.23%) for each of the following languages: Sotho, Tswana and Xhosa. Participants from the age group of 36-45 and 46-55 were in the majority (29.03%), where eight (25.81%) participants were in the age group of 25-35, and only four individuals (12.90%) in the age group of 56-65. Twenty-three (74.19%) participants held a postgraduate degree where only six (19.35%) had a general university degree, whereas two (6.45%) of the participants were only educated up to Grade 12 (non-academic participants).

The employment section included a variety of university departments where the participants comprised both groups of academics and support staff. The employment section was left out of the profile table (Table 1) above in order to keep the universities' identities anonymous. From this data the universities could have been identified since some of the participating universities specialise in certain fields of study.

### **Data-collection method**

Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data from the participants. Terre Blance *et al.* (2006) states that the advantage of semi-structured interviews builds an understanding of the phenomena by observing occurrences in a specific situation. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to obtain a clear picture of the participants' perception about the specific topic – in this case talent recruits' needs and expectations from their universities (De Vos *et al.*, 2011). The interview questions were recorded by a tape recorder and each question was transcribed accurately.

The interviews were conducted in either Afrikaans or English, depending on the participant's preference. Since the majority of the participants were Afrikaans (67.74%), most of the interview questions were partly answered in Afrikaans. As a result, the transcribed interviews had to be translated by a professional translator. The interviews took an average of 15 minutes and the following questions were included in the interview schedule in order to reach the objectives of the present study:

1. Are you aware of the fact that you are seen as a talented employee?
2. Do you prefer to be formally identified as a talented employee?

3. What are your needs and expectations of the person(s) responsible for managing your talent?
4. What would the implications be if the needs and expectations regarding your talent management are not met?

### **Data recording**

All the participants granted their permission for the researcher to utilise a digital voice recorder for the semi-structured interviews. The tape-recorded interviews were stored on a computer and the files were password protected to ensure the confidentiality of the information.

### **Strategies to ensure quality data**

Research by Lincoln and Guba (1999) indicates the four constructs that reflect the statement of the qualitative paradigm, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. These aspects are explicated below.

*Credibility:* Credibility can also be defined as an inner validity. If the research is trustworthy it could be considered as creditable (Lincoln & Guba, 1999). The researcher attempted to report the participants' needs and expectations from their universities accurately by providing true reflections of their original responses. By making use of a co-coder, the researcher ensured the accurate extraction of themes.

*Transferability:* Transferability indicates whether the findings of the study could be transferred from one specific situation to another (Lincoln & Guba, 1999). To ensure the transferability of the present research a comprehensive description of the research context was given by outlining the research setting and the characteristics of the participants (Creswell, 2009).

*Dependability:* Dependability investigates whether the research was done in a rational manner and the results were audited accurately (De Vos *et al.*, 2011). The researcher ensured that the research process was logical, well documented and reviewed by keeping records of the successive stages of the research. These records enable future readers to understand and

have access to the research process that was undertaken. In addition, the researcher provided a thorough description of the research process. This comprehensive description of the research method indicates that the present study can be considered dependable and can be replicated by future researchers.

*Conformability:* The researcher remained objective by not allowing subjective perspectives and motives to influence the data (Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi & Wright, 2010). The researcher executed the study free from bias, capturing the needs and expectations of talent recruits from the selected South African universities. Conformability was ensured by utilising a co-coder during the data analysis and by having a second independent industrial psychologist on standby to assist if necessary.

### **Ethical considerations**

Before the researcher began the study, and throughout the research, certain ethical considerations were kept in mind. These are explicated briefly below.

*Informed consent:* Different universities in South Africa were approached to take part in the research study. The universities were truthfully informed about the research purposes. A comprehensive explanation session was presented in which it was indicated that participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any given time. In addition, their informed consent provided a trusting relationship and a safe environment for participants to continue the interviews.

*Right of privacy:* The researcher made it clear that the participants' identities would be held confidential and anonymous. The participants were also assured that the data would be stored in a safe place. The information obtained from the interviews would be treated as confidential and would not be made known without their permission.

*Protection from harm:* The researcher acted in a professional manner when communicating with the participants and, furthermore, did not attempt to manipulate them. It was important to ensure that participants were not physically or emotionally harmed during the research process.

## Data analysis

The method of thematic data analysis was used to help the researcher identify, analyse, and report collective themes or patterns that has been discovered within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; De Vos *et al.*, 2011). The following six steps proposed by Creswell, 2009 was used for the data analysis (Creswell, 2009):

- *Step 1:* After the data was recorded, the semi-structured interviews were organised and prepared electronically by accurately capturing and manually transcribing the data on an Excel sheet.
- *Step 2:* Before analysing the data, the researcher first read all the information for an overview of the participants' responses, especially regarding the needs and expectations of the talent recruits.
- *Step 3:* The researcher made use of a coding process. The data was organised into categories, which were labelled according to the four interview themes.
- *Step 4:* The categories, themes and sub-themes of the data were described. A co-coder was used. The co-coder was an industrial psychologist who had knowledge and experience in talent management. The researcher and co-coder's notes were compared to ensure that the coding was done accurately. In the case where changes occurred, the researcher and the independent industrial psychologist discussed the topic and looked for common ground on the matter.
- *Step 5:* The researcher decided on the style in which the findings of the data were presented. Both sub-themes and quotes were used to describe the categories and themes extracted from the data.
- *Step 6:* The researcher interpreted the data and reported on the findings of the present study. The findings were corroborated by making use of relevant literature.

## Reporting style

The reporting of the present research results are presented in table format. The researcher reported the findings by referring to the talent recruits' needs and expectations from the selected South Africa universities, designated as the participants' point of view. The context of the data gathered from the interviews was truthfully and clearly reported by employing direct quotations from the participants' responses. These direct quotations allowed the

researcher to report in an accurate and truthful manner, which helped to validate the research findings.

## **Findings**

As was indicated, the primary objective of the research study was to explore the needs and expectations of talent recruits within selected South African universities. Three of the largest universities in South Africa participated in this research ( $N = 3$ ). Two of these three universities did confirm the use of an active talent management programme. The other university claimed not to have any formal program, policy or procedure in place to manage their talent but mentioned that they utilise a performance appraisal system to manage their talent. From these three universities, employees who were formally identified as talent, were selected to participate in the present study. Interviews were conducted with a total of 31 talent recruits from these three selected universities ( $n = 31$ ).

The information obtained from the participants is presented in the form of direct quotations and tables to indicate the themes and sub-themes extracted from the data. The conclusions were substantiated with direct<sup>2</sup> quotes from the participants.

### **Identification of talent recruits**

Before investigating what talent recruits need and expect from their universities, it was necessary firstly to determine whether these recruits are aware of the fact that their university view them as talent. From the interviews it was evident that 52% (16 respondents) are aware of the fact that they are seen as talent, and 48% (15 respondents) were not aware of this development. The majority of the employees who were unaware that they formed part of the talent pool were extremely surprised by this fact, as one has informed them about it.

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the interviews, which were conducted in Afrikaans have been translated into English by an accredited translator. These translated responses of the participants, talent recruits, are presented subsequently.

All the employees who answered *yes* to this question, and thus confirmed their awareness, were asked to indicate how they were informed of this fact. From the interviews it was clear that employees generally became aware of this fact due to the following reasons:

- This is part of their university's succession planning.
- They were informed by management.
- They noticed that they were provided with career opportunities.
- It was communicated through the performance appraisal system.
- One participant indicated that she benchmarked her own performance against her colleagues and concluded herself that she is viewed as talent within the organisation.

These results are elaborated below and the number of times this theme occurred is presented in square brackets.

### **Informal awareness of talent identification**

#### *Succession planning candidate* [8]

A number of participants indicated they are aware of the fact that they are viewed as talented employees by their university, since they were informed of their selection for the Succession Planning Programme. For example, one participant explained: “...*the mere fact that I am nominated opens up the possibility that I may apply for a leadership position in future.* Another participant indicated that he was ... *informed by the process from Human Capital Development via email where we had to submit forms for succession planning.*”

#### *Informed by Manager or Director* [4]

Some of the employees appeared to know they are viewed as talent recruits since their manager, director or direct head informed them of the fact.

#### *Indicated by career opportunities* [2]

Participants indicated they are aware of the fact that they are seen as talent because they have been given opportunities in the form of potential future career positions and training. For

example, one participant explained: *“I am aware that the University has given me particular opportunities and I’m also aware that senior management in the University has given me these opportunities. I would view this as indications of a talented person”*.

Another commented on being aware: *“... because I have been considered for more senior positions or shortlisted for more senior positions and was selected to take part in various training opportunities for the higher management type of roles.”*

#### *Performance Appraisal System [1]*

One participant indicated that he is aware of being viewed as talent because he received an award when he achieved high scores on his performance assessment: *“We actually have a performance appraisal system at the university, and based on that performance appraisal system, if you are a top performer, then you actually get rewarded with the Rector’s Award.”*

#### *Benchmarking [1]*

Employees seem to benchmark themselves against their colleagues. One employee mentioned she knows she is a talented employee since her performance is better than that of her colleagues. She stated: *“... you benchmark yourself with your employees, colleagues, and what I am able to provide is above the benchmark.”* In this case it is, however, clear that this individual was formally informed that she is viewed as talent in this organisation.

### **Formal announcement of talent identification**

During the interviews employees were asked whether they have the need or expectation to be formally identified and informed of being picked out as talent. From the interviews it was found that 11 participants (35.50%) did express their need to be formally informed, 9 participants (29%) did not want to be identified formally, and 11 participants (35.50%) seemed to be indifferent about the matter.

The employees who confirmed their belief that talent recruits should be informed formally, argued that it provides them with a sense of recognition, and may also serve as a platform to receive feedback on their performance. They also indicated that formally informing the talent

recruits may help universities to manage and retain their outstanding employees. The mentioned themes are elaborated below, and the number of times the theme occurred is presented in square brackets.

#### *Recognition [7]*

A number of the participants indicated that being informed that the university view them as talent recruits is a form of recognition and motivates them by the knowledge that they are recognised. It is also evident from the findings that these recruits also experience a boost to their self-image. For example, one recruit remarked that “... *it is important, it boosts your self-image, your self-esteem and ... sometimes one needs a little recognition ...*”

#### *Feedback on performance [2]*

Some of the recruits indicated that, once formally identified as talent, they may likely receive better feedback on their own performance, which may be beneficial to them. For example, one participant indicated that “... *it would suit me fine since then one knows one only needs some training or something in this particular direction ...*”

Another recruit indicated that such recognition would help him gain insight into the way others perceive him, for example: “*Being able to hear from others what they think of me, where I stand with them, where can I perform, have I performed in their eyes, and, what I do, I could improve on ...*”

#### *Know talent to manage talent [1]*

One talent recruit seemed to be well aware that she is marketable. She pointed out that it is important for universities to identify people like them in order to know how to manage and retain them:” *It is important that they do identify the most talented people in the institution to know how to manage them as well as to keep them here ...*”

The recruits who were unaware of the fact that they were identified as talent recruits gave their reasons, which can be explicated in terms of the following themes.

### *Competitive work environment [3]*

Participants mentioned that they are working in a highly competitive environment, and to be identified as talent recruit might cause colleagues to accuse them of being favoured. As one participant explained: *“I feel that if it is common knowledge, some of the other employees in the environment might feel that you are being favoured unfairly ...”* and in other examples participants indicated that *“... because the people are a somewhat competitive ...”* and *“... I don’t think this is a positive matter, because I think there is much internal politics ...”*

### *Increased pressure [1]*

The participants mentioned that being identified as talent may put them under increased pressure in the workplace. As one recruit stated: *“I think it would mean carrying too much pressure on one’s shoulders ...”*

### *Feeling awkward [1]*

Based on the findings it appeared that the recruits may feel uncomfortable in front of their colleagues when identified as a talent. One recruit mentioned: *“I find it awkward to be labelled in this way ...”*

A total of 11 participants affirmed that they did not care whether they are identified as a talent recruit or not. They explained that it would not make any difference to them in the work place, nor influence them in any way.

### **Recruits’ needs and expectations from their universities**

The researcher investigated talent recruits’ needs and expectations towards the person(s) responsible for managing their talent (i.e. talent management champions) at their respective universities. The themes and sub-themes extracted from the participants’ responses to the interview question are presented in Table 2 below. The number of times each theme occurred is presented in square brackets and only reflects examples of the participants’ responses.

Table 2

*Talent recruits' needs and expectations from the talent management champions*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>Training and development [28]</b>	Opportunities [16]	<i>"... the fact that my manager regularly provide me with the opportunity when development programmes are available ..."</i>
	Self-established needs [5]	<i>"One would rather say that one should be given the opportunity to choose for development oneself ..."</i>
	Time to attend training [5]	<i>"I think most important for me is to be given the time, not just the opportunity. Because the opportunities are there, but your workload is sometimes so high that you don't have the time to go for any training."</i>
	Financial support [1]	<i>"... I feel the university does a lot to develop us as individuals. If you identify a course that you want to go on and its, my boss really says no and they pay for it and everything ..."</i>
<b>Identify weaknesses [6]</b>		<i>"... I expect my Director or direct manager to see what I am doing, to identify the gaps in my work ..."</i>
<b>Support [6]</b>	Support with performance [2]	<i>"My expectations would be for such a person to do his utmost to make sure that I have the opportunity to perform well."</i>
	Support from colleagues [1]	<i>"I can only develop my talent at the Department, in the Faculty and in the University if we collaborate successfully enough as colleagues."</i>
	Emotional support [1]	<i>"Nobody asked me if I cope; no one asked me if I was OK; not even a little support ..."</i>

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Response</b>
	Financial support [1]	<i>“Very much, they are very supportive ... give me research money to run my studies, provide finances to travel to conferences and present my work ...”</i>
	Research support [1]	<i>“They are very supportive of my research work ...”</i>
<b>Autonomy [5]</b>		<i>“... not a rigid programme where I have to do this and this and this and that ...”</i>
<b>Mentoring [5]</b>		<i>“... just advising me saying, ‘But I don’t think this will work, how about trying something else instead?’”</i>
<b>Performance feedback [5]</b>		<i>“... meetings with my line manager in which certain outcomes and outputs are discussed, positioned and clarified ...”</i>
<b>Rewards [5]</b>	Financial [1]	<i>“That reward can be in different ways ... financial ...”</i>
	Incentives [1]	<i>“These incentive schemes are clearly designed to encourage you to move beyond the normal set of expected behaviour in the job.”</i>
	Opportunities [1]	<i>“That reward can be in different ways ... financial, in the form of time, in the form of position; it can be for other opportunities ...”</i>
	Promotion [1]	<i>“That reward can be in different ways ... in the form of position ...”</i>
	Time [1]	<i>“That reward can be in different ways ... financial, in the form of time ...”</i>
<b>Career planning [4]</b>		<i>“... to give people career opportunities, or to help people develop their career opportunities ...”</i>

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>Clarify needs and expectations [4]</b>	Self- [3]	<i>“What they need to do is to have conversations with you about what it is you want to do and look at how they can support that ...”</i>
	manager [1]	<i>“I expect that, throughout the year, when we have most of the time, we have one-on-one meetings with whoever, your supervisor or your line manager, and those should be continued throughout the year. Conversations about those aspects, about expectations but also from the side of the University or line manager.”</i>
<b>Identify strengths [3]</b>		<i>“... interested to know in which direction they excel or fail ... because no effort is put in per individual one does not know where one’s strengths and assets actually lie ...”</i>
<b>Induction [3]</b>		<i>“much can be done in terms of the initial type of induction into the University and helping one adapt ...”</i>
<b>Job information [3]</b>	Clear goals [2]	<i>“I want to be know precisely which goals I must attain in order for me to tick it off and know I have accomplished it – that’s important to me.”</i>
	Understand job requirements [1]	<i>“I think that they must be well aware of what is needed and expected in or what the current employee’s job entails ...”</i>
<b>Workload [3]</b>	Additional help [1]	<i>“I am currently the only employed person from the University doing what I’m doing, so we are hoping that at the end of this, we will develop a chair that I will run ..!”</i>

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Response</b>
	Eliminate tasks within weaknesses [1]	<i>"... they can reduce unnecessary tasks or tasks that I am not good at, to give me an opportunity to focus on the aspects which are important in my development and performance."</i>
	Reduced workload [1]	<i>"... they can reduce unnecessary tasks"</i>
<b>Goal setting [2]</b>	Self-set goals [2]	<i>"I need a bit of flexibility to have an input in what I want to do, in comparison with what they want me to do because they have a plan, I have a plan, but the two plans have to meet somewhere in the middle so that we can negotiate some sort of direction together ..."</i>
<b>Not micro-managed [2]</b>		<i>"Everyone knows what is expected of them so, for me, to use an exaggeration and, to flourish within my position as lecturer and researcher: don't micro-manage me."</i>
<b>Apply skills [1]</b>		<i>"... freedom to partake in these courses and develop my skills and I would like to apply them as well in my daily job."</i>
<b>Encouragement [1]</b>		<i>"... it has a lot has to do with personal encouragement, motivation ..."</i>
<b>No needs and expectations [1]</b>		<i>"I don't really have any needs or expectations specifically."</i>
<b>Prepare for job [1]</b>		<i>"Prepare the person for a specific position so that when this person retires or move out or resign, there would be another person available already to fill that position."</i>

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>Realistic expectations of promotion [1]</b>		<i>"You cannot create expectations that someone would occupy a certain position within a year, two, three or five, seeing that times have changed. No one can guarantee you this, except a private organisation or when it's a family position."</i>
<b>Recognition [1]</b>		<i>"... where people are recognised for performing."</i>
<b>Structure [1]</b>		<i>"... I long for structure, my need is structure; I can function within structure, thus this is my need."</i>
<b>Work within areas of strengths [1]</b>		<i>"... they can reduce unnecessary tasks or tasks in which I am not good at so that I have an opportunity to focus on the things which are important in my development and performance."</i>

Table 2 illustrates what talent recruits seek from their selected universities. It is clear that these recruits within South African universities have various needs and expectations from the person responsible for managing their talent (i.e. the talent management champion). The themes and sub-themes that were found within the responses are explicated below.

### *Training and development* [28]

Almost all the participants indicated that their main needs and expectations from the talent management champion are training and development.

- *Sub-theme 1: opportunities*, where 16 participants expressed their need that the university provide them with opportunities for training and development.
- *Sub-theme 2*: five participants desired the opportunity to *discuss their own* training and developmental needs with their superiors.
- *Sub-theme 3*: five employees indicated that, although the university provide them with the opportunities to attend training, they often do not have the time available to utilise these opportunities. Therefore they needed *sufficient time* to attend training programmes.
- *Sub-theme 4*: one employee mentioned the need for *financial* support to attend training courses.

The findings show that talent recruits are not given sufficient time to attend training courses and thus they indicated that their need and expectation in this case is more time for training.

### *Identify weaknesses* [6]

Talent recruits in the universities of South Africa appear to have the need to know what their weaknesses are and they expect their managers to discuss and develop this aspect.

### *Support* [6]

Various participants have indicated the need for support, and identified different forms of support. These forms can be represented by the following sub-themes:

- *Sub-theme 1: support with performance* – two participants indicated the need for support from their superiors to manage their performance; they also required management assistance and input to perform well.
- *Sub-theme 2: collegial support* – one participant expressed his need for an environment of collegiality at the university.
- *Sub-theme 3: emotional support* – one recruit appears to have the need for emotional support, in the form of someone dropping in and make sure she is doing well.
- *Sub-theme 4: financial support* – one talent recruit expressed the need for financial support to fund his training and development opportunities.
- *Sub-theme 5: research support*, where the recruit indicated that he would appreciate more support from the university to do his research successfully.

#### *Autonomy [5]*

Five talent recruits mentioned that they seek freedom and flexibility from their universities. The talent recruits claimed they want to do work they find pleasant. Furthermore, the recruits remarked that they want to experience new challenges and explore new ideas without being limited.

#### *Mentoring [5]*

Five recruits indicated that they need a mentor(s) who can guide and lead them. They mentioned that they expect such a mentor(s) to make suggestions and inspire them to experiment with a variety of new avenues.

#### *Performance feedback [5]*

Some recruits indicated their need and expectation from their managers to provide them with some sort of feedback on their performance. These five talent recruits stated that they wish to discuss their performances openly, in order to know if they are performing as management expect them to.

### *Rewards [5]*

Three recruits stated that they would appreciate rewards for their performance. In this regard several forms of reward were identified from the participants' responses. The following sub-themes were extracted from the data in this regard:

- *Sub-theme 1: financial rewards* – one participant emphasised that his need and expectation from the talent managing champion should provide him with financial rewards.
- *Sub-theme 2: incentives* – one participant mentioned that incentives will inspire employees to show good corporate citizenship behaviour.
- *Sub-theme 3: opportunities* – one recruit indicated his desire to receive rewards in the form of various opportunities.
- *Sub-theme 4: promotion* – one recruit mentioned he would like to be rewarded in the form of promotion to a higher job level.
- *Sub-theme 5: time* – one participant expressed this notion by indicating that he would like rewards in the form of additional time.

### *Career planning [4]*

Four of the recruits expressed their need that management should assist them in their career planning and provide them with attractive career opportunities.

### *Clarify needs and expectations [4]*

Talent recruits indicated that the clarification of needs and expectations is important to them. These driving factors can be expressed either by the talent recruits themselves, or by their managers. Three of the participants requested the opportunity to express their needs and expectations regarding the university. One of the participants stated he would appreciate it if his manager would indicate exactly what he expects from him as an individual. The participants who indicated their desire to clarify their needs and expectations, suggested that meetings could be held quarterly or bi-annually for this purpose.

### *Identify strengths* [3]

From the responses it is clear that recruits want to know what their strengths are and they expect management to help them identify the aspects of their work in which they excel.

### *Induction* [3]

Three participants indicated that they expect the universities to follow a proper induction programme for newly appointed employees at the institution, or when they are appointed to new positions. They requested sufficient information and training, which would help them adapt to their new positions successfully.

### *Job information* [3]

Three respondents indicated that they require sufficient information about their own jobs. In this regard, two sub-themes were identified.

- *Sub-theme 1: clear goals* – two participants mentioned that they expect the talent management champion to indicate clearly which goals they need to achieve in their positions.
- *Sub-theme 2: job requirements* – one recruit wished to be informed which tasks and responsibilities is part of his job, in other words, what is expected of him or her in their position.

### *Workload* [3]

Some of the participants indicated that managers need to give attention to their workload. The following sub-themes could be captured from the data:

- *Sub-theme 1: additional help* – one participant mentioned that she would appreciate assistance to carry out some of the job demands. It seems as if this employee feels overwhelmed by her daily workload.

- *Sub-theme 2: eliminating tasks within weaknesses* – one recruit indicated that he expect from the University to eliminate tasks that fall within his area of weaknesses. It seems as if he wanted the talent management champions to focus on aspects of his work in which he is adept, not the matters that require more time and energy. The reason is that struggling to complete tasks that require more time and energy, may add to his heavy workload.
- *Sub-theme 3: reducing workload.* One talent recruit expressed the need to have his workload reduced. However, he did not make suggestions how the University could achieve this.

#### *Goal setting [2]*

Two talent recruits indicated that the talent management champion should allow them to generate the own objectives and goals in their work. One of these two participants stressed the importance that the universities should support them to pursue their aim in life.

#### *Not micro-managed [2]*

Two recruits mentioned that if the talent management champion would attempt to micro-manage them, they would not be able to deliver outstanding performance. It seems as if these two participants do not want to be monitored continually since they expect to act with integrity without constant supervision.

#### *Apply new skills in job [1]*

One talent recruit wanted the opportunity to apply in his daily job the new skills and abilities that he gained through training and development initiatives. It is clear that this particular participant does not only want to attend training, he also wants to apply these newly-acquired skills to improve his job performance.

#### *Encouragement [1]*

Encouragement was one of the themes extracted from the research findings. One of the recruits expressed the need to be commended, enthused and inspired by his manager.

*No needs and expectations [1]*

One employee indicated that he does not have any particular needs and expectations from the university.

*Prepare for job [1]*

One of the participants suggested that the university should use the opportunity to guide and train talent recruits for specifically identified positions. Thus, by preparing these individuals for the nominated positions, the talent management champion ensures that, when the recruits are appointed to the position, they are already familiar with the job requirements of this position.

*Realistic expectations of promotion [1]*

One talent recruit expects her manager to provide her with a realistic expectation of being promoted. She indicated that the university should refrain from making promises about future career opportunities if they are not in a position to honour these promises.

*Recognition [1]*

One recruit mentioned that he wants management to give him the deserved recognition for efficient performance.

*Structure [1]*

A participant indicated that he expects to function in a well-organised environment with rules and regulations which all employees follow, and thus expects the university to provide him with such a structured work environment.

*Work within areas of strengths* [1]

One participant stated that he prefer to work in his area of excellence. In other words, he wishes to perform more of the tasks that he is good at and which let him stand out in his work.

**Implication if needs and expectations are not met**

The researcher investigated the implications if talent recruit's needs and expectations were not met. The themes and sub-themes extracted from the participants' responses to this interview question are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3

*The implications if talent recruits' needs and expectations are not met*

Theme	Response
Job hunting [10]	<i>"I would probably start looking for another job."</i>
Communicate dissatisfaction [5]	<i>"... my responsibility is then to verbalize those needs to my direct superior and let's see how we can address that."</i>
No turnover risk [4]	<i>"I am not going to pack up and leave if something goes wrong."</i>
Feeling frustrated [4]	<i>"I think the immediate implication is a sense of frustration ..."</i>
Resign [4]	<i>"... if you don't give me what I want then I am going to leave."</i>
Feeling undervalued [2]	<i>"... it will always be leading towards a feeling of being undervalued or not having the recognition that you think that you are supposed to get."</i>
Low job satisfaction [2]	<i>"Complete dissatisfaction with the job .."</i>
Seeking support outside University [2]	<i>"I got industry support because the University doesn't really have resources to meet all my expectations."</i>
Seek solutions actively [1]	<i>"... and let's see how we can address that."</i>
Low motivation [1]	<i>"Low work satisfaction, low motivation to go to work."</i>
Not taking initiative [1]	<i>"You won't actually try to identify projects and problems. You will merely await instructions."</i>
Only meet minimum job requirements [1]	<i>"You won't tackle your job over-enthusiastic; so what if you miss the deadline. Just do the minimum; just flying barely below the radar; just doing enough to retain your job."</i>
Poor job performance [1]	<i>"Frustration. Poor performance."</i>

Table 3 illustrates the implications if talent recruits' needs and expectations are not met. The natural assumption would be that such employees would consider leaving the job. However, results seem to indicate that there are other implications as well if these inner motivations of talent recruits are not answered.

#### *Job hunting* [10]

A significant number of participants indicated that they would consider scouting for job opportunities elsewhere.

#### *Communicate dissatisfaction* [5]

Some recruits asserted that their first strategy would be to bring it to their manager's attention that their needs and expectations are not met, and that they are dissatisfied.

#### *No implication* [5]

Some of the participants appeared to be quite satisfied with their occupation in the University. They argued that there would be no implication if their needs and expectations were not met since they are content to work for the university. Two participants indicated that since they are older and advanced in their career they would not consider leaving the organisation if their needs are not met.

#### *Feeling frustrated* [4]

Talent recruits pointed out that they would most likely experience feelings of frustration if their needs and expectations were not met.

#### *Resign* [4]

Four of the participants indicated that they would resign if their needs and expectations were not answered. Furthermore, one participant indicated that she would only resign if she could be offered a higher salary somewhere else.

*Feeling undervalued* [2]

Two recruits indicated that if these inner motivations are not met, they might perceive that the University fails to recognise their worth and consequently they would feel undervalued.

*Low job satisfaction* [2]

Some employees pointed out that they would most likely experience a sense of dissatisfaction in their jobs if their needs and expectations were not met.

*Seeking support outside university* [2]

Some of the talent recruits revealed that they would seek support outside the University. More specifically, one participant indicated that he would seek support from sources other than the University if they were unable to satisfy his needs. Another participant explained that he would look for opportunities from clients outside the university if the need arises.

*Seek solutions actively* [1]

One of the participants suggested that he would seek solutions actively. It appeared that he was not prepared just to accept that the University does not invest time and effort to fulfil his needs and expectations; he indicated that he would try and find a solution until he was satisfied.

*Low motivation* [1]

One participant claimed that he would become demotivated if his university does not address his needs adequately.

*Not take initiative* [1]

One talent recruit who participated in the research indicated that she would not take any initiative and would only complete tasks that her manager directly request from her.

### *Only meet minimum job requirements [1]*

One recruit indicated that he would only try to meet the minimum job requirements if his needs and expectations within the university were not met. In other words, it appears as if the participant would present a low level of corporate citizenship behaviour and will not be willing to 'walk the extra mile' in his daily occupation.

### *Poor job performance [1]*

One participant claimed that she would not be a high performer in her job if her needs and expectations were not deemed important to the University and if management does not invest in aspects that are important to her, workwise.

## **Discussion**

The discussion consists of the specific objectives and will be corroborated with the findings of this present research study.

### Outline of the findings

The primary objective of the present research study was to examine talent recruits' needs and expectations of talent management programmes in South African universities, by working from an interpretative paradigm (Creswell, 2007). It became evident that the individuals, whom their universities view as talent, have various needs and expectations they want met, especially from the person responsible to manage their talent (i.e. talent management champion). The specific objectives that flow from the primary objective of the present research study are corroborated with the findings below.

The *first specific objective* was to determine whether talent recruits are aware that they have been identified as talent and to explore their opinions on the identification of talent.

It was found that the majority of the participants were aware of the fact that they are viewed as talented employees. The findings revealed various reasons that indicate how talent recruits became

aware of this development, which include being incorporated into the Succession-Planning Group. The findings underline the importance to manage the organisation's future needs by anticipating the need for talent and being able to fulfil it in time (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

Furthermore, the results indicated that mostly talent recruits were informed that their managers view them as talent. It was evident that they were given certain career opportunities and therefore knew that they were considered as talent. According to Bryant and Allen (2013) it is the managers responsibility to communicate growth opportunities as part of the talent management system. Based on the results of this study it was evident that the performance appraisal systems also made talent recruits aware of the fact that they were seen as talent. Armstrong and Taylor (2014) posit that performance management systems are effective methods that can be used to identify those with special abilities and clear potential. Findings also reveal that talent recruits benchmark their performance against that of other employees and thereby make their own assumptions about their talent.

This study, ifound that talent recruits either wish to be identified formally as talent, or did not mind about the matter since it would make no difference to their performances. This is in accordance with findings by Evans *et al.* (2010) that talent recruits usually wish to know their talent status since it would make them feel recognised and valued more. The minority of the participants in the present research indicated that they do not want to be identified formally as talented due to reasons such as a competitive working environment and unwanted increased pressure.

These findings are not fully in accordance with previous literature, which focused more on the outcome of informing a talent recruit and not necessary on the reasons why these recruits do not wish to be informed they are viewed as talent. Björkman *et al.* (2013) found that if such recruits are informed but do not want their status known, it can lead to negative attitudes within the work environment.

The *second specific objective* was to identify the recruits' needs and expectations of talent management programmes in South African universities.

The results of the present research indicated various needs and expectations that recruits in South African universities have from their institute, and particularly from the talent management champion. These inner motivations are explicated below.

*Training and development:* It was found that the majority of talent recruits have the need for training and development. The results specifically revealed that recruits seek effective training and development opportunities. Furthermore, the research indicated that recruits want to be able to discuss their own training and developmental needs with their superiors. They also need enough time to attend training courses and, finally they expect the University to fund their attendance of training courses.

This finding aligns with previous research by Theron *et al.* (2014). However, one concerning factor is that universities have inadequate developmental opportunities available to address academic staff's needs and expectations within these institutions (HESA, 2011). Another concerning factor is the universities' inability to provide talented individuals with funding for training and development (Austin, Chapman, Farah, Wilson & Ridge, 2014).

*Identify weaknesses:* In accordance with research done by Janson (2015), the present study found that employees expect their superiors to identify their area of weaknesses, in order for them to improve their skills, knowledge and abilities to achieve better performance.

*Support:* Davies and Davies (2010) maintain that leaders should execute processes in such a way that it identifies talent recruits' needs and especially indicates where management can provide sufficient support. This is in accordance with the findings of the present research. Talent recruits indicated that they expect from their universities and the talent management champion to provide them with support. The results of the present study highlight various forms of support: for performance, collegial, emotional, financial, training, developmental opportunities and research. Previous research by Van der Brink *et al.* (2013) confirms that talent recruits require support with their performance and research outputs.

*Autonomy:* The findings indicate that talent recruits have the need and expectation to have autonomy. This is in accordance with research by Jorgensen (2005) and Van der Brink *et al.* (2013): Talent recruits expect that their universities should allow them to make their own decisions and explore new ideas (Horgan, 2010).

*Mentoring:* Mentoring talent recruits will be a clear factor to address talent recruits' needs and expectations regarding their universities and especially the talent management champion

(Knowledge Resources, 2015; Theron *et al.*, 2014). It was evident from the present research that these recruits expect this champion to enrol them in a type of mentorship programme. Previous research done in other universities also emphasises that adequate mentoring programmes are imperative (Austin *et al.*, 2014; Riccio, 2010; Woodward, 2014).

*Performance feedback:* The findings show that these recruits have the need for feedback on their performances. This is in accordance with previous research findings that: Universities need to improve their current practices of feedback through the performance appraisal system since this process can influence the talent recruit's decision to consider leaving their job (Pienaar & Bester, 2008; Talent Keepers, 2015).

*Rewards:* It was evident from the research that talent management champions within South African universities would help meet the recruits' needs and expectations if they are rewarded. The findings indicated that these rewards can take on various forms, which include: financial rewards, incentives, different opportunities, promotion and time. This finding is in accordance with research by Theron *et al.* (2014). Other previous researchers, however, found that remuneration within universities are still not competing with that of the private sector. Therefore, due to heavy workloads, it seems an impossible task to promote opportunities for talent recruits within South African universities (Selesho & Naile, 2014).

*Career planning:* Four of the recruits expressed the need that management should assist them in their career planning and provide them with attractive career opportunities. In accordance with previous research it is evident that employees expect to be given career goals to attain (Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011; Taneja, Sewell, & Odom, 2015).

*Clarify needs and expectations:* The results indicated that talent recruits want to be able to inform their universities of their specific needs and expectations. Furthermore, the research also revealed that the participants want their universities to inform them what it expects from them. This is in accordance with research by Buthelezi (2010), which stresses the importance for recruits to be aware of management's expectations for them.

*Identify strengths:* Research by Evans *et al.* (2010) and Janson (2015) indicate that talent recruits wish to know where their areas of strength lie. The present study also found that the recruits wanted to be informed of their areas of excellence.

*Induction:* Based on the research findings it was evident that talent recruits want to undergo proper induction training when they are taken on board at the university. In accordance with previous research it was found that a structured induction process is crucial to ensure that talent recruits are equipped properly to adjust in their working environment (Gogate & Pandey, 2015).

*Job information:* The findings indicated talent recruits' expectation that their university would provide them with sufficient job information to understand what their job entails. It was found that these recruits want to understand their job requirements and furthermore, they expect from the university to give them clear goals to attain. Aligned with previous research, it is important that organisations focus on the requirements of talent recruits' positions. This would help them to be successful in their specific roles as well as the context in which they function daily (Davies & Davies, 2010; Takawira, Coetzee, & Schreuder, 2014; Talent Keepers, 2015).

*Workload:* The research indicated that talent recruits within South African universities have various needs and expectations from their universities regarding workload. The findings showed that talent recruits in particular require additional help. Furthermore, it was found that they expect from the talent management champion to eliminate tasks in their area of weaknesses, and to reduce some of the workload. Selesho and Naile (2014) indicate that talent recruits within universities are under extreme pressure due to heavy workloads; thus addressing their need of a lighter workload may ensure staff retention.

*Goal setting:* Talent recruits indicated the desire to set their own goals. In accordance with research by Farndale *et al.* (2014), it was found that talent management programmes need to be more balanced by aligning the needs and expectations of the organisation with those of individual employees.

*Not micro-managed:* The findings indicated that talent recruits within South African universities prefer not to be micro-managed. It was noticeable that responses came from individuals among the younger generation. This is in line with previous research by Deloitte (2010) and Martins (2014) who found that different generations have different expectations regarding management styles.

*Other needs and expectations:* Even though various themes were identified to understand talent recruits' needs and expectations regarding their universities in South Africa, it was evident from the present research that in several cases only one participant raised a particular issue.

The following themes were only mentioned once; therefore it can be concluded that these aspects do not necessarily reflect the majority of talent recruits' needs and expectations, rather individual preferences. The single indicated preferences found in the present research study are as follows: (1) apply skills; (2) encouragement, (3) prepare for job; (4) realistic expectations of promotion; (5) recognition; (6) structure; and (7) work within areas of strengths.

The majority of the above-mentioned needs and expectations found in the present study are well aligned with previous research that also links to engagement and retention (Austin *et al.*, 2014; Gogate & Pandey, 2015; Selesho & Naile, 2014; Tiwari, 2015).

*No need or expectation:* It was evident from the findings that only one talent recruit indicated that he has no needs and expectations from his university or from the talent management champion. This employee seems content to be employed by his university.

The *third specific objective* of the present research study was to explore the implications if talent recruits' needs and expectations were not met.

When talent recruits' inner motivation is not answered it is assumed that they would leave the university. However, the findings indicated various implications when talent recruits are dissatisfied in this sense. The present research study particularly found that if talent recruits were not satisfied, it would have the following results – talent recruits would: go job hunting, feel frustrated, resign, feel undervalued, experience low job satisfaction levels, seek support outside the university, show low motivation, not take initiative, show low corporate citizenship behaviour and deliver under-par job performances.

Previous research rarely refers to possible implications when talent recruits' needs and expectations are not met in South African universities. The majority of scholars only highlight factors that would cause these recruits to leave the university (Barkhuizen *et al.*, 2014; Pienaar & Bester, 2008; Samuel & Chipunza, 2013; Smith, 2014; Theron *et al.*, 2014).

Even though the present research identified various implications, it was noticeable: some recruits indicated that, if they were not satisfied, they would actively seek solutions and communicate their dissatisfaction. Furthermore, it was found that a number of participants appeared highly satisfied with the university and argued that there would be no implication if their needs and expectations were not met. Previous research rarely focused on the implications when recruits were dissatisfied, and in particular there was limited research on the positive outcomes even when needs and expectations were not met.

### Practical implications

The present study's practical implications are related to talent recruits' needs and expectations from their universities in South Africa. The findings did not present a central theme to indicate what talent recruits need and expect from South African universities. If organisations spend more time to address these recruits' needs and expectations, the latter would feel more engaged toward their daily work responsibilities and take accountability for their tasks, which may eventually lead to a higher retention rate (Tiwari, 2015). The present study is thus of value to all South African universities as they are all responsible for implementing and executing an effective talent management programme. Ultimately, this study will contribute to the practice of Human Resource Management by emphasising the importance of addressing talent recruits' needs and expectations within South Africa universities, and in particular by identifying the areas that need attention for an effective talent management development programme.

### Limitations and recommendations

Various limitations affected this particular research study. The first identified limitation was the design and method. The research study provided promising results and positive methodological strengths but the sample may be questioned. The present research only included three South African universities; a fourth university that was willing to participate did not have a talent management programme in place. It would have been ideal to study this phenomenon amongst more, or across all the South African universities. Therefore, it is suggested that future research should include more universities in the sample in order to reach better generalisability.

This study also included voluntary participation from any employee who is viewed as a talent recruit by his or her university. In this regard, it is important to note that the talent profile between academic and support staff may differ. As a result, talent recruits from support staff in comparison with those from the academic staff present different needs and expectations. The researcher should have narrowed down the research and focused on only one of these groups.

It is recommended that future research investigates creative ways to introduce interventions that will address the needs and expectations of talent recruits. Furthermore, it will be recommended that future research first conceptualises the notion of talent within the university as well as the different criteria for talent between support staff and academics, since both groups are important to ensure sustainability and growth in such an institution. Finally, it is recommended that other organisations in South Africa review how they currently manage their talent recruits, particularly regarding their needs and expectations. Findings have shown that talent recruits will be engaged more and will not consider leaving the organisation if their inner motivational drives are satisfied.

## Conclusion

A fundamental managerial responsibility for this decade is talent management. If universities want to compete globally, they will have to manage their talent recruits by meeting their needs and expectations. Different talented individuals have different inner motivations that drive them and therefore South African universities should invest time and effort to understand these motivations in order to create appropriate interventions. If talent recruits' needs and expectations are well met it may lead to better engagement and retention of staff. Engaged and committed talent recruits will be the key drivers who will help attain the goals set by South African universities.

The present study is relevant because it tackles the issue of talent management within South African universities and in particular talent recruits needs and expectations from their university. This article has reported on the extrapolative importance of talent management for organisations but especially within universities. Therefore, the present study has contributed to the existing research on human resource management. The gain is an increased insight into talent recruits' motivators and drivers within South African universities. These research findings will be helpful to South African organisations and universities alike since every industry needs talented employees if it wants to survive in a competitive environment.

The findings of the present research will guide universities to change their thinking on how they currently manage their talent recruits' needs and expectations by comparing their talent management process to the benchmark that have been set. The research will also help universities understand the return on investment when catering for talent recruits' inner motivating factors. Universities may use the findings of the present study as a guideline to develop interventions and strategies by which to improve current management processes that target talented employees.

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## CHAPTER 4

## CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 4 presents the conclusions from the present study. These conclusions are drawn from the literature review and the findings in accordance with the study's research objectives. The limitations of the research are discussed, followed by recommendations for future research.

### 4.1 Conclusions

Within the constructivist-interpretive paradigm, individuals typically construct knowledge about their subjective perceptions and project their own meaning and realities of the phenomena onto the observed reality (Wagner, Kawulich, & Garner, 2012). The primary objective of the present research study was to explore how policies and procedures were implemented and managed in South African universities in order to identify, attract and recruit, develop, engage and retain talent. Also to examine talent recruits' needs and expectations of talent management programmes in South African universities, particularly regarding the person responsible for managing their talent (i.e. talent management champion).

The conclusions that were drawn were based on the specific objectives of the research study, which are explicated below.

The *first specific objective* was to explore how talent management policies and procedures were conceptualised in the literature.

The talent management policies and procedures to identify, attract and recruit, as well as develop, engage and retain talent typically forms part of the talent management programme (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). The following conceptualisations were captured from the literature:

- *Talent identification* is the process whereby the talent management stakeholders determine who will be included in the talent pool (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).
- *Attracting and recruiting talent* means making a job opportunity attractive for a talent recruit and, furthermore, to ensure that these recruits are aligned with the right roles, at the right time within the right organisational culture (Ng, 2013; Phillips & Gully, 2015).

- *Talent development* is the focus of an organisation or institution to plan, select and implement development strategies that will ensure that talent recruits enhance their skills, knowledge and abilities, which will help them excel in their current positions (McCauley & McCall Jr., 2014).
- *Engagement* occurs when talent recruits are managed in such a way that they are motivated to 'walk the extra mile' and show positive corporate citizenship behaviour (Rani & Reddy, 2015).
- *Retention* refers to the management of talent recruits to encourage them and prevent them from leaving the organisation (Naim, 2014).

It can be concluded from the information above that talent management and talent management policies and procedures are interventions aimed to manage the full lifecycle of talent recruits.

The *second specific objective* was to determine whether South African universities have formal talent management procedures, policies or programmes in place.

The participating universities failed to provide a comprehensive, effective talent management policy or procedure. Even though talent management or elements of this process were mentioned in the institutional plans and university strategies; vague, generalised statements were made about the programmes that are in place. Therefore, it was clear from the findings that the participating universities were not able to point out any comprehensive policy or procedure used for talent management.

The *third specific objective* was to identify the individuals chosen by universities to champion their respective talent management processes.

The main question was: Where does the *responsibility* lie to execute the talent management programmes, including the related policies and procedures? It was found that top management (e.g. the Vice Chancellor) as well as the Human Resources Department are responsible for implementing and executing the talent management programmes. This finding was in line with previous research by Beechler and Woodward (2009) and Vilkinas and Ladyshevsky (2014).

The *forth specific objective* was to explore which policies and procedures were implemented in South African universities that help to identify, attract and recruit, as well as develop, engage and retain talent.

In general it was found that limited research was undertaken on the nature of these talent management policies and procedures within the environment of South African universities; therefore the majority of the present research relied on international studies. It was found that the participating universities in South Africa failed to provide concrete, comprehensive talent management policies and procedures.

No policies and procedures were implemented to *identify* talent recruits. From the results it was clear that the universities place adverts in the daily press or make use of headhunting companies if they wish to *attract and recruit* talent from outside or within the university. Universities in South Africa use learning, training and development programmes to *develop* their talent recruits (Conger, 2010). It was noticeable that universities in South Africa do not have separate policies or procedures in place to develop talented employees; the institutions utilise general policies and procedures for training and development. The research found that South African universities also do not have talent *engagement* and *retention* policies and procedures in place, even though various researchers place emphasis on retaining and engaging talent recruits to create a competitive environment (Barkhuizen, Mogwere & Schutte, 2014; Higher Education South Africa, 2011; Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011; Pienaar & Bester, 2008; Samuel & Chipunza, 2013; Theron, Barkhuizen & Du Plessis, 2014).

The conclusion is that, talent management within the universities in South Africa remains a concern. Vague, general statements were made by the participating universities to indicate how they work through the various phases with talent recruits in their talent management programmes. It was clear that these universities could not indicate a comprehensive talent management policy or procedure that was in place. Without effective talent management policies and procedures, which function as interventions to manage talent recruits, the competitive advantage for the organisation can be hampered in the future (Pienaar & Bester, 2008; Riccio, 2010; Taneja, Sewell & Odom, 2015).

The *fifth specific objective* was to examine how South African universities monitor the talent management process.

It was found that South African universities monitor talent management through institutional plans, records of performance management and staff development plans. The findings indicate ambivalence: on the one hand, the universities take note of talent management in their institutional plans or strategies; on the other hand, the talent programmes were not in place as was intended. Research by Knowledge Resources (2015) points out that Human Resources (HR) information's systems can help monitor the talent management programmes.

The *sixth specific objective* was to determine whether South African universities consider their talent management as successful.

The results of the study indicated that talent management programmes in the participating universities of South Africa are not in place. Therefore, based on the finding, it can be concluded that the talent management programmes in the universities of South Africa are not as successful as management perceive it to be.

The *seventh specific objective* was to identify the challenges experienced by South African universities in managing their talent.

The findings revealed that line managers are not communicating the talent management process to talent recruits. It was also found that a second challenge is incentives for talent recruits. These incentives can be in various forms, from salaries to bonuses. This is in line with previous research by Coates *et al.* (2009) that individuals obtain higher salaries outside the university environment.

The present research discovered another change facing South African universities, namely including individuals of previously disadvantaged groups in the talent pool. Due to a lack of high quality education in their school system, there may be a low delivery of Black, Coloured and Indian students who could have been potential talent for the University and also contribute to transformation.

The *eight specific objective* was to determine whether talent recruits are aware that they have been identified as talent, and to explore their opinion on this identification.

The findings indicated that the majority of talent recruits were aware of the fact that they are viewed as talent by their universities. The present research study found that talent recruits used the following avenues to become aware that they are included within the talent pool:

1. Included in the succession-planning group.
2. Informed by their managers that they are seen as talent.
3. Given certain career opportunities and therefore know that they are seen as talent.
4. Informed by managers that they are included in the talent management pool.
5. Deduced it from the performance appraisal systems.
6. Benchmarked themselves against other employees' performance and make their own assumptions whether they are talent or not.

In addition to talent awareness the talent recruits have their own opinion about talent identification. Previous research by Björkman, Ehrnrooth, Mäkelä, Smale and Sumelius (2013) found that, if talent recruits are informed that they are seen as talent but do not want their status known, it can lead to negative attitudes. However, the present research findings show that the majority of the recruits wanted to be informed formally of their status. A small number indicated they could not care less whether they are formally informed or not because it would not influence their performances. The minority of the participants in the present research indicated that they do not want to be identified formally as talent due to reasons such as a competitive working environment and unwanted increased pressure.

The *ninth specific objective* was to identify the recruits' needs and expectations of talent management programmes in South African universities.

The findings indicated a wide variety of recruits' inner motivators and drivers, which can be captured in the following common themes: training and development; identify weaknesses; support autonomy; mentoring and performance feedback. Less common themes include: rewards, career planning, clarify needs and expectations, identify strengths, proper induction, job information, workload as well as goal setting and not being micro-managed. Furthermore, talent motivators entail incentives such as opportunities to apply skills, encouragement, prepare for job; realistic expectations of promotion; recognition; structure; and work within areas of strengths.

To conclude: it was noticeable that talent recruits within South African universities have various needs and expectations from their institutions. If the universities want to create and sustain a talented workforce, policies and procedures to manage the talent should be aligned with the inner motivating factors for talent recruits.

The *tenth specific objective* was to explore the possible implications if talent recruits' needs and expectations are not met.

Although it is generally expected that, if talent recruits' needs and expectations are not met, they would resign, it was evident from the research findings that there are in effect various implications. These include the following: job hunting, feeling frustrated, resign, feeling undervalued, experience low job levels of satisfaction, seeking support outside the University, show low motivation, do not take initiative, show low corporate citizenship behaviour and deliver poor under-par job performances. In addition, positive reaction was also identified from the findings as some talent recruits indicated that they would seek solutions actively and communicate their dissatisfaction.

To conclude the findings of this study: Universities in South Africa should strive to create a culture where talent recruits' needs and expectations are met.

## 4.2 Limitations

Regardless of the positive results of this research, various limitations were identified that affected this particular study.

The *first limitation* concerns the research design. The sample comprised only three South African universities ( $N = 3$ ). The fourth university that was willing to participate in the research did not have a talent management programme in place. Therefore, for the research of Article 1 and 2 only three tertiary institutions were consulted ( $n = 3$ ). This sampling size can be seen as a limitation since three universities only make up a small percentage of the total number of 24 universities in South Africa. Future research can accurately reflect the current status quo of talent management programmes by including all or the majority of South African universities. In the second phase the researcher had to depend on the three talent management champions to provide the names of the individuals who are being viewed as talent in the university.

Therefore a *second limitation* would be the snowball sampling method. In this regard the findings indicated that the majority of the participating universities did not have an active talent management programme in place, especially to identify talent recruits. Therefore it could be questioned whether the names provided by the talent management champions gave a true reflection of the actual talent recruits within the respective universities. Future research can address this issue by defining the concept of talent and by ensuring that participants are more aware of what is meant by ‘talent’ before asking them to provide a list of talented employees to the researcher.

Eventually only 31 ( $n = 31$ ) talent recruits were included in the present research. This fact can be pointed out as a *third limitation*. Thirty-one talent recruits may appear a sufficient number for a qualitative research study. However, since these recruits were drawn from different faculties and diverse job positions such as support staff and academics, the study’s scope became too broad. Although better selection could have been made regarding the research design to include more or all the universities in South Africa, it would have been time-consuming and costly, thus due to a lack of resources this aim was not possible to pursue. Furthermore, the researcher depended on the names provided by the talent management champions and there were only a limited number of names presented for the interviews.

The *forth limitation* identified in the present research was the fact that the concepts ‘talent’ and ‘talent management’ within the university environment were not defined sufficiently. It was evident that management had its own perception of the mentioned concepts. As a result, talent management champions could not accurately explain their university’s talent management programmes, nor indicate which policies and procedures are in place to manage talent. Therefore this limitation is clearly due to the participants’ subjective experiences of talent management, which influenced the trustworthiness of the data.

### 4.3 Recommendations

The recommendations of the research study have two foci: for the universities as organisation, and suggestions of avenues for future research on this topic, building on the findings of previous research and the present study and addressing the limitations.

### **4.3.1 Recommendations for practise**

It was clear from previous research as well as the findings of the research study that talent and talent management are critical for any organisation, especially universities. It was found that the participating South African universities do not pay enough attention to their talent management programmes. If this is the case in the selected universities it may also apply to various other similar South African tertiary institutions. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the universities in South Africa review the current status quo of their talent management programmes.

The present research study suggested that universities should benchmark the meaning and implication of the concept 'talent' within the South African university environment. Benchmarking the term talent within universities should be done differently for support staff and academics, since these two groups will have different objectives. For example, academics would pursue the research objective, which members of the support staff do not necessarily share with them.

Once universities have defined which employees should be considered as talent they can start with the talent identification phase of the process. A framework or guide for talent identification will make it easier to measure employees to ascertain which recruits can be included in the talent pool. It is also recommended that universities implement attraction and recruitment policies and procedures as part of their talent management programme. Universities in South Africa should strive to make a prospective career so lucrative that local and international talent are attracted to start a career within their institution. This can be done by advertising a career at the university and visibly highlighting the incentives and benefits of the job positions on the advertisement.

In addition, it is recommended that managers should be comfortable in dealing with the concepts of talent and talent management. If managers fail to understand the importance of talent management they will not invest the time and effort to enhance their talent management programme. It is also recommended that managers should attend various leadership development courses to equip them with more effective management skills. This will enable them to discuss the talent management process and its elements with talent recruits. Furthermore, it is suggested that training and development policies and procedures should also be in place to facilitate talent recruits. More can be done to invest in training and developmental opportunities for these recruits. Training policies and procedures can be designed in such a way that it includes mentoring and coaching programmes and as well as leadership development for the talent recruits.

Furthermore, it is recommended that South African universities pay more attention to their engagement and retention programmes. These programmes should be designed in such a way that it fulfils the needs and expectations of talent recruits. The implications when talent recruits' inner motivations are not met should not be denied or taken lightly. The universities' talent programmes should be constructed according to the various needs and expectations of these recruits. The findings of the present study provide guidelines to managers on the prominent motivators and drivers for talent recruits, for example, assist them to identify and build strengths and weaknesses and give them regular feedback. In this regard performance management systems can be used more effectively to give talent recruits feedback on their performances.

It is, furthermore, highly recommended that the universities in South Africa create an environment where talent recruits find sufficient support in various work-related elements such as workload, work within areas of strengths, as well as time to attend training courses, and other incentives. Creating a culture where the talent recruits enjoy autonomy and are able to experiment and explore new ventures, can be highly beneficial for the universities of South Africa. If these universities invest in the work aspects important to talent recruits, (i.e. meeting their needs and expectations) it would lead to higher engagement and retention levels, giving the institution a competitive advantage in the global market for knowledge and skills development.

To conclude: It is clear that the creation and implementation of a talent management programme in South African universities will not be an easy undertaking. The status quo is that various elements of the talent management process need to be addressed and taken into consideration. In this regard universities in South Africa can invest in contracting an external talent management specialist as consultant who can advise them on how to design, develop, implement, and execute an effective talent management programme within their institutions.

#### **4.3.2 Recommendations for future research**

In light of the limitations above, recommendations for future research also focuses on the selection of the research method. Future studies on this topic should certainly include more universities to participate in the research. This will enable researchers to draw more accurate findings on this phenomenon by targeting the majority of or all the South African universities. It is also recommended that future researchers should first form an understanding of talent management

champions or management's own definition of the concepts of talent and talent management. If future researchers can guide these role-players from universities to find conceptual clarity on this matter, those researchers will be able to formulate further relevant objectives that will contribute to the literature on human resources.

Furthermore, if the mentioned role-players from the universities are familiar with the concepts talent and talent management, the snowball sampling method would be more reliable. In other words, they would be able to identify participants who are a truer reflection of the existing talent recruitment process. Therefore, it is suggested that future research should include line managers in future studies to ensure that the subjective opinions of the individuals responsible for managing talent within the universities can be validated.

A further recommendation for future research would be to narrow down the scope of the research to either support staff, or academics only, seeing that the talent profile between these groups may differ due to different objectives.

Finally, future research studies can be conducted to identify and address daily challenges South African universities face with talent management. The aim should be to have a well-managed university which is globally competitive and shows sustainable growth.

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