TALENT MANAGEMENT: PERSPECTIVES, PRACTICES AND EVALUATION IN

UK PRIVATE SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

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Abstract

Talent management continues to attract attention in both the practitioner and the academic literature. However, despite its ascendency and popularity, there are many gaps left for further theoretical development because it remains a fairly new concept. Thunnissen (2016) noted that one of the key challenges that scholars have experienced over the past decade has been some unanswered questions regarding the definition, scope and goals of talent management. Moreover, there is little empirical research into the ways that organisations evaluate their own programmes or into the impacts that talent management has on people and organisations. This study seeks to contribute to the conceptual and empirical understanding of the nature of talent management and its evaluation.

Interpretivist philosophy was adopted involving four qualitative case studies in private sector organisations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with HR/talent managers, senior managers and employees in each organisation. Findings show that the identification, development and retention of talented employees were key features of the talent management processes observed. Findings also reveals that the conceptualization and operationalization of talent management varies between organisations but in a way that each variation and its accompanying philosophy can be described in terms of a core driver namely succession planning, valuable goods, pivot points and inclusion. Although evaluation is seen as a very important aspect of the talent management process, the impacts of talent initiatives on the organisation are not measured.

Furthermore, this study identifies a number of emergent factors that practitioners should be aware of and account for in the talent management process including managing the expectations of employees in the talent scheme, transparency of the talent management process, issues relating to gender diversity, allowing employees to develop at their own pace as well as issues relating to direct line managers having the sole responsibility of identifying talent.

Acknowledgement

Table of content

Chapter four: Research design and methodology

Chapter five: Case study findings

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Appendices

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THESIS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of this project, which focuses on talent management (TM) and its evaluation in private sector organisations in the UK. Section 1.2 provides a background to the research. Section 1.3 is an overview of identified research gaps from extant literature, and section 1.4 outlines the aim and objectives. Section 1.5 provides a brief summary of the research method adopted while section 1.6 looks at the significance of the research regarding the theoretical and empirical contribution to the talent management field as well as practical implications for TM/HR practitioners. Lastly, Section 1.7 concludes with an overview of the thesis structure.

1.2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

With the emphasis on human capital and its strategic importance for organisational success, employees and their collective abilities, skills, and experience, coupled with their capacity to deploy them in the interests of organisations are now being recognised as making a significant contribution to competitive advantage and organisational success (Armstrong & Baron, 2002). This view is echoed by Yarnall (2011) who contends that as organisations continue to operate in a volatile market environment where the changing condition of competition is also changing the perspective concerning employees in human resource management, employees who were once treated as costs became the most valuable assets of the businesses. Furthermore, today employees are considered critical talents creating added value. In light of this, academics and practitioners have increasingly focused on human resource management (HRM) practices as leverage by which managers shape the human capital within their organisations (Innocenti, Pilati & Peluso, 2011). Armstrong (2010) suggested that ensuring organisations are able to achieve success through people now remains the overall purpose of human resource management and HRM systems can be the source of organisational capabilities that permit firms to learn and capitalise on new opportunities (Ulrich & Lake, 1990).

Beginning in the late 1990s, companies were confronted with a major threat to doing business: there was a demand for talented employees that far surpassed the supply, thus creating a global talent shortage (Chambers et al, 1998; Michaels et al, 2001). The well-known phrase 'the war for talent,' which entered the management lexicon was

introduced by a group of McKinsey consultants during the late 1990s (Chambers et al, 1998) and sparked the current interest in talent management (TM). In a world of fast change, organisations appreciate that the fundamental factor that will allow them to create a difference for their customers, bring them success through new and creative ideas, and make the highest contribution is to develop and retain their skilled employees; and to benefit from them in accordance with the objectives of the organisation (Armstrong, 2010). Collings and Mellahi (2009) argue that organisations rely on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of their employees to provide a primary source of their competitive advantage, yet despite this realisation, they are confronted with a growing shortage of talented people. The increasing worldwide demand for talent, along with the shrinking availability of exceptional talent, has made talent acquisition, development, and retention a considerable strategic challenge for many companies (Silzer & Dowell, 2010).

For the nearly two decades, TM has become an increasingly popular topic (Chuai et al, 2008; Höglund, 2012), and the TM literature has experienced substantial growth in recent years (Iles et al, 2010; Thunnissen, 2016). Deep in an economic downturn, talent management is seen as a high-priority issue for organisations worldwide (Bhatnagar, 2008; Mäkelä et al 2010) and, despite the recent recession, strategies for identifying, developing and retaining talented employees remain firmly on the agenda for many organisations (CIPD, 2009; Yapp, 2008; Yarnall, 2011). In the aftermath of the recent financial crunch, talent management has become increasingly critical given the outflow of key individuals from many organisations hit hard by the economic downturn (McDonnell, 2011; Somaya & Williamson, 2011; Sparrow et al, 2013). A resourcing and talent planning survey by CIPD in 2011, observed that despite high unemployment after the global recession of 2008 in the UK for example, the competition for talent by organisations continues to increase as the pool of talent to hire from decreases, thereby making TM a critical element for organisational success and sustainability (Canon & McGee, 2011).

Talent management, it is assumed, supports organisational success through the identification, development, deployment and retention of exceptional individuals (Iles et al, 2010; Thunnissen et al, 2013). A Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) survey reported that 90% of the respondents believed that talent management activities could positively affect an organisation's bottom line, and more than half had already implemented such activities (Clarke & Winkler, 2006). Similarly, in a U.S. Institute of Management and Administration survey, almost three-quarters of the respondents said managing talent was at the top of their critical HR issues list (Iles et al, 2010).

An examination of two McKinsey quarterly global surveys in 2006 and 2007, by Guthridge et al. (2008) reveals that business leaders are profoundly concerned about the impact of finding talented people for their organisation to remain competitive in global markets. The 2006 survey, for example, indicated that respondents regarded finding talented employees as likely to be the single most critical managerial preoccupation for the decade. A second McKinsey quarterly global survey conducted in 2007 revealed that nearly half of the respondents expected intensifying competition for talent and the increasingly global nature of that competition to have a major effect on their organisations over the next five years. No other global trend was considered nearly as significant. Guthridge et al. (2008) expressed the view that the widespread belief that expensive efforts to address the problem have so far largely failed compounds the frustration of many senior executives. For example, organisations in the past decade have invested heavily in implementing various processes and systems and talent issues have undoubtedly moved up the boardroom agenda, and although these moves are commendable and necessary, they have been inadequate at best, superficial and wasteful at worst. Also, too many organisations still dismiss talent management as a short-term, calculated problem rather than an elemental part of a long-term business strategy requiring the attention of top-level management and substantial resources.

The growing attention given to talent and anticipated talent shortages is affected by factors which can be seen as the drivers of TM practices in various organisations globally. Firstly, scholars (see Potter, 2005; Schuler et al, 2011; Silzer & Dowell, 2010) argue that changing demography is a major force and shaper of the current global talent challenges. For example in North America, Western Europe, Japan and Australia, the age of retirement is being ushered in by the baby boomer generation. Strack et al. (2008) observed that while this trend may be a relatively short-term phenomenon in North America (due to current birth and immigration rates), population shrinkage is a longer term event in Western Europe and Japan. According to Beechler and Woodward (2009:3) 'increasing longevity, declining birth rates, and the inordinate size of the baby boom (post-war) generation are significant demographic forces driving an extraordinary shift in the age distribution of the general population, and with it, the labour supply.' It has been noted that with higher levels of healthcare and sanitation, people born in the 21st century can expect to live between 65 and 80 years in most developed countries, compared to 50 at the beginning of the 20th century (US Census Bureau, 2008). Moreover, this longevity is accompanied by dramatically declining birth rates (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). Guthridge et al. (2008) suggest that a particular demographic challenge also comes from Generation Y (i.e. people born after 1980) whose outlook has

been shaped by, among other things, the Internet, information overload, and overzealous parents. HR practitioners say that these workers demand more flexibility, meaningful jobs, professional freedom, higher rewards, and a better work-life balance than older employees.

As companies expand into new international markets, a second major factor affecting the supply of talent comes from globalisation (Guthridge et al, 2008). Since the early 1990s, the business environment has gone through a significant expansion with falling trade barriers and globalisation. For many organisations, growth has come through global expansion, and this expansion has put a premium on having the global talent needed to support these initiatives (Silzer & Dowell, 2010). This, in turn, has brought about greater competition for the best talent amongst organisations (Michaels et al, 2001). Globalisation is a concept that scholars, professionals, and individuals use when referring to many different phenomena. Of great interest to this discussion on talent shortages, globalisation relates to the expansion of world trade, intensified competition among firms, the potential to reach many more clients around the world, and the line-up of individuals worldwide who now comprise a global labour market (Schuler et al, 2011). With increasing economic integration across nations, globalisation in addition to demographic changes profoundly impacts on labour supply and the talent war.

Bryan and Fraser (1999) argue that geographic-based economic hurdles are falling as national governments remove legal and regulatory barriers to international interaction; capital markets are colossal and global, and expeditious advances in digital technology have cut the cost of communications and computing. A report by the International Labour Office in 2008, suggests that world markets, including those in the poorest regions, are more connected and stronger today. Beechler and Woodward (2009:3) observed that the labour market integration is driven by foreign direct investment (FDI) which amounted to $1.8 trillion in 2015 (UNCTAD, 2016). Beechler and Woodward (2009) contend that the growth of FDI has led to talent shortages in some industries and countries, fuelling the global talent war.

Thirdly, mobility of labour is seen as another factor affecting the war for talent globally. According to Brewster et al. (2007:309), 'talent itself has become more mobile, and organisations are therefore having to coordinate the way they manage it on a global basis.' Although mobility of labour is not a new phenomenon and historically, the diffusion of technologies has owed much to human mobility, however, the movement of people has intensified as economic activity has become more globalised (OECD, 2008). Tung and Lazarova (2007) observed that with the rise of globalisation, labour

competition, and border mobility are possible with lower immigration and emigration obstacles, and with people more willing to relocate outside their home countries. Therefore, globalisation changes the mobility of individuals across permeable geographic and cultural boundaries (Baruch et al, 2006).

Mobility is not just about meeting the demand for professional workers, its significant for innovation comes from its contribution to creating (generating) and diffusing knowledge. Once in another country, individuals transmit their expertise and skills. In the work environment, knowledge spreads to colleagues, especially those in close contact. Knowledge also spills over to individuals and organisations nearby and can contribute to the emergence of local concentrations of activity. Mobile talent also acts as a vital complement to the transfer of knowledge through flows of goods and capital across borders (OECD, 2008). The mobility of labour is viewed as a major contribution to economic growth especially in developed countries since high-skilled workers have a larger emigration rate (5.5% compared to 1.6% for medium-skilled and 0.9% for low-skilled). These rates are moving far faster for the high-skilled group than for the rest (Economist, 2006). Tung and Lazarova (2006) however, noted that reverse migration trends are beginning to intensify. Many countries are luring returnee immigrants as a cadre of highly trained and qualified people with invaluable Western-style managerial experience and entrepreneurial skills, while simultaneously possessing a local market knowledge and access to networks in the host country. Supported by government policies and economic liberalisation, dynamic reverse migration is converting a 'brain drain' into "talent flow" (Carr et al, 2005).

Lastly, in a knowledge-based economy, the continuing growth in specialisation in all disciplines associated with the explosion of knowledge has resulted in a smaller pool of experts in any one field from which to draw. So the necessity of finding, developing and retaining the skills needed has become a challenge for many organisations (Canon & Mcgee, 2011). The departure from product-based to knowledge-based economies is a major business transformation impacting the global war for talent (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). Business survival in a competitive market hinges on speed and continuous self-renewal of knowledge, and developing talent is, therefore, central to the operations of many organisations in general (Stahl et al, 2007). A knowledge-based economy relies on a highly skilled labour force, not only for research and high-technology sectors but increasingly in all areas of the economy and society. Moreover, the growing intensity of knowledge means that all countries have a greater need for highly skilled workers who can access, understand and use knowledge for technological and economic development. The global competition for this talent pool is on the rise (OECD, 2008).

Globally, the service sector provides 42.7% of jobs compared to agriculture (34.9%) and industry (22.4%), and in developed economies, the service industry is even larger; for instance, representing 71.5% of all EU jobs (ILO, 2008). Service economies shift investment towards intangible and human assets (Beechler & Woodward, 2009).

Among human assets, high-value decision makers are increasing in number and importance, making organisations much more dependent on their employees, particularly on their top talent (Pink, 2001). Knowledge workers are being recognised as core competitive assets in many organisations, and as the currency of business because of the strategic value they bring to the organisation as well as the strong impact they can have on the financial outcome of the organisation (Silzer & Dowell, 2010). Companies are hiring more employees for more complex occupations requiring higher cognitive ability. They are also organising themselves to hire, retain and raise the productivity of their most valuable knowledge workers to remain competitive in a volatile market environment (Johnson et al, 2005; Rae-Dupree, 2008).

In the light of the above discussions on factors affecting the supply of talent in organisations, Harrison (2009) argues that the so-called war for talent has intensified in the UK due to a combination of elements including; high employment, the emergence of a full scale knowledge and service-based economy where relational and intellectual capital rather than manual or practical skills offer the keys to prosperity and growth, the nation's continuing failure to develop the kind of skills base required to drive the economy forward, a constant reorganising process by companies across all sectors and countries in order to attain greater cost efficiencies, a faster rate of innovation and improved competitive capability; an accompanying need for the growth and advancement of gifted corporate and front-line leaders in organisations. In making a business case for TM in organisations, Silzer and Dowell (2010) contend that TM is more than a popular HR programme, and is now regarded as a leadership imperative in many organisations. Because of the current complex business challenges that need to be addressed, they argued that it will be difficult for any organisation to succeed in the long term without making talent central to their business model.

1.3 RESEARCH GAP

Talent management as a fairly new managerial concept continues to receive attention from academics and practitioners. Although academic TM literature explores the field in many directions–using a broad range of academic traditions, including international HRM, strategic HRM, career management and organisational behaviour (Gallardo-Gallardo et al, 2015), in the field of HRM, talent and TM appear to be relative poorly

developed research subjects, and to add a lasting improvement to the field of HRM, TM has to overcome some limitations and difficulties (Thunnissen et al, 2013).

Firstly, despite the increasing scholarly attention for TM during the past ten years (Thunnissen et al, 2013), and especially over the course of the last two years (Gallardo-Gallardo et al, 2015), there is still no consensus on its definition, theoretical backgrounds, and scope and this might be one reason why practitioners and academics find its realisation quite challenging. Dries (2013:3) also suggest that in relation to TM practices, a 'vague but appealing rhetoric' even causes critics to question whether TM is not just a management fad.

Secondly, despite the rise in talent management practices in many organisations and the attention TM as attracted in the academic community, there is a lack of empirical research in the field. A review of TM by Thunnissen et al. (2013) confirmed the assertion made by Lewis and Heckman (2006) and Collings and Mellahi (2009) that talent management lacks empirical research. Nevertheless, they acknowledge the number of empirical research papers has increased since 2010 and two-thirds of the papers on talent management were found to be conceptual.

Thirdly, a critique of the literature is that it reflects a narrow and biased view of talent and TM. For example, an instrumental and managerial approach to talent and TM are presented, in which the organisational perspective is emphasised (Thunnissen et al, 2013). Stahl et al. (2012) observed that the emphasis on organisations' interest is quite pronounced in empirical research, in which managers, executives, and HR professionals are the commonly targeted research population. Although talent or talented employees are the central subjects, scholarly articles have shown little interest in the experiences and opinions of such talented employees (Thunnissen, 2016). Currently, in the TM literature, there is very little empirical research that examines TM from an employees' perspective (e.g. Björkman et al, 2013; Dries & Pepermans, 2008).

Lastly, in relation to the specific question of the evaluation of talent management initiatives, there is a dearth of empirical research into the ways that organisations evaluate their programmes or into how they assess the impacts that talent management has in their organisations. According to Theunnissen (2016:58), the actual effectiveness of TM practices is hardly explored empirically. The study conducted by Bethke-Langenegger et al. (2011) of 138 Swiss companies is a rare exception into the effectiveness of TM practices. Thunnisssen (2016) argues that in reality, many business leaders, practitioners and academics attach great value to talent and TM, but there is still little known about how and how well (and according to whom) TM really works in

practice. Moreover, in line with this argument, Boxall et al. (2007) suggest that HRM should provide an alternative for the tendency for "best practicism" which is dominant in HRM and TM. There is, therefore, an argument for an analytical approach to TM that concentrates on a careful descriptive research to address the "what, why, how and for whom" questions that underpin the TM activity.

1.4 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is to explore TM practices and its evaluation in private sector organisations operating in the UK. In order to achieve this aim, the following research objectives were identified:

a) To examine why organisations adopt TM programmes. With the rise in profile and the proliferation of management ideas and practices, business organisations are known to adopt certain management practices depending on their size and sector. Organisations are often criticised by business commentators, including management academics for adopting new practices and referring to such practice as management fashion (Abrahamson, 1996; Daniel et al, 2012). The focus of this research objective, therefore, is to explore why organisations adopt talent management initiatives.

b) To establish how 'Talent and TM' is conceptualised in case study organisations.

In the implementation of talent management programmes, organisations are most likely to face some issues or obstacles and one of these being the nature of talent. Organisations have to decide whom to include as talent and what they mean by the term talent, and this can affect the design of the talent management approach (Silzer & Dowell, 2010). Despite many organisations placing a high priority on TM and the increased knowledge base of the subject, the literature reveals that some organisations do not even know how to define talent (i.e. what is talent or who do we consider to be talented), let alone manage talented employees (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Tansley et al, 2007). This research objective explores what is meant by the term talent in the case study organisations.

In relation to the concept of TM, although many organisations attach importance to TM because of the perceived benefits it brings or offers the organisation, organisations are less precise on what TM really means. Scholars (see Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Warren, 2006) suggest that many organisations that do have a talent management system in place do not have a formal definition as to what TM is in their organisations. This research objective further explores the meaning of TM in organisations under focus.

c) To explore employees' perspective and experiences of TM programmes. Despite the increasing amount of empirical research, it is well documented that TM as a means of staying competitive in the current business environment mostly reflects the management perspective or narrative while there is a lack of empirical research about employees' experience of TM (Björkman et al, 2013; Dries & Pepermans, 2008; Thunnissen, 2016). For example, Clark et al. (1998) suggested that given the high level of investment in human capital and the expected returns, organisations and scholars tend to concentrate considerably on managerial perspectives and business returns on investment as opposed to individual gains while considering HCT. Therefore this research objective examines the views of employees within and outside the talent pool of their lived experiences regarding the TM practices adopted by their organisations.

d) To examine how talent management initiatives undertaken by organisations are evaluated. So much has been said about the growing popularity of talent management in academic literature and amongst organisations but very little is known about the effectiveness of TM programmes implemented by various organisations or the impact of such initiatives on the organisation and its employees. This research objective examines how TM programmes are evaluated as well as exploring what the programme impact is on the organisation and its employees and to subsequently develop a programme evaluation model.

1.5 RESEARCH METHOD

Given that talent management is a new and emerging field as well as the paucity of the research on TM, a case study approach was adopted for this study. The research was conducted in four private sector organisations in the UK, operating in manufacturing, hospitality, healthcare, and logistics. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with HR/talent managers, senior managers and employees in each case organisation. Interviews were audio-recorded with permission of the participants and subsequently transcribed. Consistent with other case study based research, interviews were guided by an interview schedule derived from the research questions (Yin, 2003). The interview questions focused on the approach and definition of talent management as well as the evaluation of talent management initiatives evident in the organisations. Within and cross-case analyses (Eisenhardt, 1989) were undertaken by identifying themes within the cases and then grouping or contrasting the cases according to those themes. Tabular layouts of the case data according to the identified themes were used to aid the cross-case analysis. More details of the research method and design are given in chapter four.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This thesis seeks to contribute to the conceptual and empirical understanding of the nature of talent management and its evaluation in UK private sector organisations. This empirical research will, in general, contribute to a growing body of knowledge in the talent management field, importantly in the area of the evaluation of talent management initiative which is under-researched and rarely discussed in the literature. This study will give an insight into evaluation practices and philosophies in organisations, and the comparison of talent programmes in different industries will help to enhance the understanding of practice. This study also identifies a number of critical factors that practitioners may need to take into account in the talent management process such as; managing the expectations of employees in the talent scheme, issues relating to the diversity of the talent pool or employees identified and selected into the talent programme, the prospect of allowing employees to develop at their pace as well as the issues relating to direct line managers having the sole responsibility of identifying talented employees.

1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter two presents a review of literature on the conceptual analysis of talent and talent management. It discusses the functional roots talent of management practices, approaches to the operationalization of TM practices and describes the various TM philosophies found in the literature. The review looks at the processes of TM in organisations as well as a critique of talent management practices. This chapter concludes by discussing the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study i.e. human capital and institutional theory.

Chapter three discusses human resource development (HRD) programme evaluation. The chapter describes the purposes and benefits of programme evaluations and issues relating to barriers and challenges to programme evaluation. The chapter presents a review of evaluation models, talent management programme evaluation as well as evaluation instruments used in data in data collection.

Chapter four provides the research methodology and the design. The chapter is organised around seven main topics namely: the research philosophy, research approach, research strategy/design, target population, data collection method, data analysis technique, reliability and validity as well as ethical considerations.

Chapter five presents the findings in the case organisations. Descriptions of the research findings are presented case by case to enhance the understanding of TM practices in

each organisation. This chapter gives the overall picture of the TM programme from both the management and employees viewpoints. It also presents emerging themes from the operationalization of TM such as; managing the expectations of employees in the talent scheme, issues relating to gender diversity, allowing employees to develop at their pace as well as issues relating to direct line managers having the sole responsibility of identifying talent.

Chapter six is the discussion and interpretation of the main findings from the case studies in the context of the literature. Discussions are presented around the major themes of the research findings namely; talent definition, the conceptualization of talent management, approaches to the operationalization of talent management, why organisations adopt talent management initiatives and the evaluation of talent management programmes within case study organisations. The analysis takes the form of within and cross-case syntheses of the major research findings as well as emerging themes; it also discusses the similarities and differences in the talent management activities/practices across case study organisations.

Chapter seven reviews the aims and objectives of the research and provides a conclusion from the study. The chapter outlines the contribution to the field of talent management especially as it relates to private sector organisations as well as discussing limitations of the current study and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF TALENT MANAGEMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the conceptual analysis of talent and talent management. It discusses the functional roots talent management practices, approaches to the operationalization of TM practices and describes various TM philosophies. This review also looks at the processes of TM programmes in organisations as well as a critique of talent management practices. Furthermore, the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study i.e. human capital and institutional theory is presented.

2.2 THE 'TALENT' CONCEPT

Although the knowledge base on talent management has risen lately due to some helpful theoretical contributions, such as reviews on (strategic) talent management, the obscurity regarding definitions, theoretical frameworks, and empirically based proposals for the use of talent management in practice persist (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Lewis & Heckman, 2006). These obscurities can frequently be traced back to different translations of the term talent: what is talent or whom do we regard to be talented? These translations, in turn, are interconnected with major suppositions and beliefs about the nature, value, and instrumentality of talent (Meyers & Woerkom, 2014). Howe et al. (1998:399-400) observed that people are seldom exact about what they mean by the term 'talent' in organisations and the effects of defining talent for talent management practice (Tansley et al, 2007).

Given the above, it is no coincidence that the starting point for any research into talent management must definitely be an exploration of what is meant by the term 'talent'. This research will seek understanding of the term talent by looking at the etymology of 'talent,' English and other European languages usage of the word talent, and how talent is defined in organisations.

2.2.1 A brief etymology of 'talent.'

The word' talent' and its usage have developed over time, and it dates back biblical times (Michael et al, 2001). According to Tansley (2011) etymologically speaking, the word 'talent' is age-old, and lexicologists have identified how the term has changed greatly

with time, people and locality. For example, it originally started with the Greek word talanton which means 'balance, weight, sum of money' and was later known in Latin as talentum or talenta. Talente, the ancient English word used for talent up until 1149 derived from the Latin term talentum. Talent at first denoted a unit of weight used by the Babylonians, Assyrians, Greeks and Romans and talent turned into a monetary unit when value was attributed to one talent of silver (Knowles, 2005; Stevenson, 2010; Cresswell, 2009).

The word "talent" entered English through the Bible. In Matthew 25: 14, there is a reference to a man who, about to travel, entrusts his property to three servants, giving five talents, two and one respectively "according to their ability" (Tansley, 2011). The entrusting of talents to the servants in this parable indicates that the master knew the competence of each of his servants, and gave them tasks on that basis. The servants who got five and two talents both used their talent effectively, raising their worth through diligence and trading. The servant who received only one talent, however—afraid to suffer loss and annoy his master—hid his talent in the ground. After a protracted absence, the master on his return called the servants to render an account of their stewardship, regarding the talents entrusted to each of them. The master praised the two servants who doubled their talents as being good and faithful and entrusted them with additional responsibilities, but the unproductive servant with had his talent withdrawn and handed over to the most productive servant. The Greek translation of this verse uses the word "talent", whereas another version (New English Bible) renders the Greek word "talent" with the word "capital". As observed by Tansley (2011), HR professionals also use the term "human capital", which in some contexts is synonymous with "talent".

The meaning of talent underwent a great change, representing an inclination, disposition, will, or desire by the 13th century (Meyers et al, 2013). According to Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013) talent was seen either as the feeling that makes an individual want to do something (i.e. an aptitude), or the natural attributes of a person's character (i.e., a disposition). In the 14th century, talent then embraced the meaning of a unique flair, which was likely predicated on figurative translations of "The Parable of the Talents" (Matthew 25:14–30). The subtext of this parable expresses that talents—whether they are translated as monetary units or aptitudes—are helpful and should not be squandered and this moral still applies in contemporary time (Meyers et al, 2013).

In the late middle ages, talent came to mean a person's mental ability or unique abilities, divinely assigned to them for their personal use and improvement (Hoad, 1996; Knowles, 2005). This meaning of talent was strongly affected by Christian translations of the

Parable of the Talents, which did not only emphasise the innate nature of talent but also the fact that it is a person's responsibility to use and improve the talents endowed to them by God. Michaels et al. (2001) assert, "Talent is a gift that must be cultivated, not left to languish" (p. xiii). Since only a few people were believed to be divinely endowed with specific talents, the Parable contributed to exclusive translations of the term talent. In this translation lies the root of talent being conceptualised as an inborn gift or flair (e.g. Gagné, 2000).

By the nineteenth century talent was seen as embodied in the 'talented' — e.g., the 1914 Huddersfield rugby league 'Team of All Talents', the 1890s Sunderland 'Team of All the Talents' (Iles, 2013) as such, a person of talent and ability. According to Gallardo et al. (2013) in this context, we experience, for the first time a 'subject' perspective to talent (i.e. talent as individuals), rather than an 'object' approach, which conceptualises talent as characteristics of people. Over the period of the twentieth century, some new terms arose. For instance, since the 1930s, 'talent scout' (or spotter) is used to represent a person searching for new talent. The emergence of this term might expound why up until today many people link talent to sports or music (Creswell, 2009).

2.2.2 Meaning of talent in English and other European languages

In order to provide useful insights into modern understandings of talent and its management in varied socio-cultural contexts, Holden and Tansley (2008) performed a philological analysis (see Table 2.1) of the word ''talent'' from both a linguistic and an historical -comparative perspective -Philology is the area of linguistic science, which analyzes relationships among languages and chronicles the history of words. They studied publications by consultancies and articles in the management press examining both denotative (literal) definitions and connotative (metaphoric) associations of the term talent in English, noting contrasting usages of the word in other languages.

Table 2.1 Talent definition in English and other European languages

Domain	Definition
Danish	The Danish language is consistent with these definitions: ''innate abilities for a particular field''; ''an individual who has talent'' (Politikens, 2000); ''innate abilities''(Politikens, 2000)
French	One official French dictionary relates to a given disposition, given by God (Grand Robert, 1991). This is a rare occurrence of lexicologists ascribing talent to divine inspiration. The same dictionary also implies that talent, however, gifted, serves ''to succeed in something'' (''pour re´ussir en quelque chose''), observing that talent is also 'a special aptitude' which is

Russian	quite "appreciated by social groups". This definition suggest that talent can only be recognised as such by people capable of appreciating it
	Definitions in Russian also refer to "outstanding innate qualities, especially natural gifts" (Ozhegov, 1984) and "outstanding capabilities in a given area or field (artistic, scientific, political), giftedness and being a gifted person" (Leikhin, 1955)
Polish	In Polish, we see not only similarities with these other definitions, but also a substantial expansion of the term. In a Polish-English dictionary, we find a differentiation between the singular (talent) and plural (talenty) in Polish. The singular word is translated by "talent" and "gift"; the plural by "endowments" and "accomplishments" (Stanisławski, 1994). In a Polish business dictionary, talent is defined as "A person endowed (gifted) with unusual ability; innate (intrinsic) or acquired (learned) ability to do something in an outstanding, creative way'.
German	In the German language talent is regarded as an innate disposition to good achievements in a particular field. This peculiarity is seen as a "gift" which empowers someone to achieve a conspicuously above-average or exceptional performance in a particular area or field, especially in the arts.
English	In contemporary English dictionaries, talent is defined as "a natural ability to do something well" (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2006) and "a special faculty or aptitude; high mental ability, a person or persons of talent" (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1990)

Source: Adapted from Holden & Tansley, (2008).

From Table 2.1, the word "talent" in various European languages clearly shows a high level of general meaning i.e. talent taken as inborn attributes across languages. The English translations of talent, as well as dictionaries of other European languages (German, Russian, French and Danish) usually take the position that talent is an innate endowment that manifests itself in a specific area of endeavour and is connected to excellent performance in some way. So, an innate quality or ability is one that an individual has, especially non-taught. This definition suggests that talent is not obtained and therefore still bears a striking similarity to the meaning of talent in the late middle ages (Meyers et al, 2013). Some scholars have challenged this opinion that talent is just innate; they reckoned that talent is shaped through interactions between nature and environment, but they can not specify how much each of them contributes (e.g. Gagné, 2004; Renzulli, 2005). This varying school of thought has led scholars to nature versus nurture argument in the understanding of the term talent. Despite this debate, talent

constitutes a special ability or aptitude with those seen as talented able to demonstrate exceptional achievements in mental and physical areas (Tansley, 2011).

2.2.3 Approaches to the conceptualization of talent in organisations

Some contend that companies do not even know how to define talent, let alone how to manage it (Economist, 2006). There are many varying opinions of what talent is, and the attributes of talented individuals and a CIPD (2006) survey indicates that how talent is defined is; organisationally specific and highly affected by the kind of industry and the nature of its work; dynamic, and so likely to vary over time according to organisational priorities. Tansley et al. (2007) further observed that organisations often find greater value in formulating their connotation of what talent is rather than accepting shared or prescribed definitions and that there will be major differences, for example, in how talent is defined in a local authority and in the hospitality industry.

Talented people have special gifts, abilities and flair which enable them to perform effectively (Armstrong, 2010). For example, some see talent comprising those individuals who can make a difference to organisational performance, whether through their instant contribution or in the longer term by demonstrating high degrees of potential (Tansley et al. 2007). Silzer and Dowell (2010:13) define talent as "an individual's skills and abilities and what the person is capable of doing or contributing to the organisation." Many academics and practitioners see talent from this perspective. For example, Morton et al. (2005) describe talent as individuals who have the capacity to make a major difference to the present and future performance of the company. Others see it in everyone, inherent in each individual realising their potential (Redford, 2005). Although organisations, HR professionals and academics disagree in their opinions on talent and despite the variety of definitions, a widespread denominator is that individuals who have talent have technical capability and leadership 'potential' to contribute greatly to the success of their organisations (Elegbe, 2010).

Gallardo et al. (2013) identified two major approaches to the conceptualization of talent within the world of work namely; object approach (talent as traits of people, such as abilities, knowledge and competencies) and subject approach (talent as people), which relates to differentiation of the workforce. Definitions of talent from a subject approach can be classified into an inclusive (all employees) or an exclusive (a select group) approach (Thunnissen et al, 2013).

2.2.3.1 Talent as characteristics of people (object approach)

Within the object approach (talent as traits of people), talent is conceptualised as outstanding abilities and attitudes demonstrated by an individual with a range of favourable measures of ability including natural ability, mastery of a particular practice, commitment (both to one's own work and to the employing organisation) and fit (between the individual's talent and the work context) (Gallardo-Gallardo et al, 2013). According to Iles (2013:1), talent can be seen as 'object' i.e. the 'what' of TM or individual characteristics, with a basic distinction between talent as a natural ability (unique abilities, inborn) and talent as mastery (systematically developed knowledge and skills).

From the object approach (i.e. talent as attributes of people) , talent is conceptualised as outstanding abilities and attitudes shown by an individual with a range of complimentary measures of ability covering natural ability, mastery of a particular practice, commitment (both to one's own work and to the employing organisation) and fit (between the individual's talent and the work context). In this way, it relates to a concept of skills as seen in the economic/public policy domain by Buchanan et al. (2010). This conception recognises a thorough comprehension of skill that takes into consideration three dimensions; behavioural (the personal qualities of the worker to handle interpersonal relationships), cognitive (level and kind of education and training undertaken to help understand and act in the world) and technical (the capacity to undertake specific set tasks) (Devins & Gold, 2014).

Within the object approach to talent, Gallardo et al. (2013) identified four distinct approaches to how talent as characteristics of people is conceptualised in the world of work and these include;

- Talent as natural ability: to some degree, many HRM scholars and practitioners seem to believe that talent is inborn, for example, Hinrichs (1966), describes talent as a native ability: '(…) a unique mix of innate intelligence, plus a certain degree of ingenuity or the capacity to go beyond well-established stereotypes and provide creative solutions to problems in his everyday world, plus personal skills which make him productive in his relationships with his peers, his superiors, and his subordinates' (p. 11). In this context, Buckingham and Vosburgh (2001) contend that while skills and knowledge are relatively 'easy' to teach, talent pertains to attributes much more lasting and special. Therefore, talent is quasi-impossible to learn or teach. Davies and Davies (2010) argue that, given its innate nature, talent cannot really be managed and suggested that organisations should focus on the enablement of talent instead.

- Talent as mastery**:** some scholars (see Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006; Ericsson et al., 2007) view talent as a function of experience and effort rather than innate abilities. This perception of talent holds that talent is made and not born. The mastery approach to talent suggests a need for proof, for example, Ericsson et al. (2007), suggest that talent should be "demonstrated by measurable, consistently superior performance" (p. 117). De Haro (2010) states that, if no proof of outstanding accomplishment is available, we are not talking about talent but giftedness. Talent therefore in this view, represents the mastery of systematically developed gifts (Gagné, 2000)

- Talent as commitment: another dimension to talent in organisations is what Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013) refer to as commitment. In this view, talent is conceptualised as employee's commitment to work or the employing organisation. Nieto et al. (2011), for example, suggest that talent is determined chiefly by perseverance in that it indicates the successful completion of projects that most others would jettison or never even start. As observed by Ulrich (2007), talent as a commitment to an organisation represents an employee's willingness to invest discretionary energy into their organisation's effectiveness, thereby aligning personal goals with organisational goals. Commitment in this regard indicates not only giving one's best to the organisation but also serves as a barrier to leaving the organisation (Jericó, 2001).

- Talent as fit: this perspective to talent as characteristics of employees in organisations represents the fit between an individual's talent and the climate within which he or she works, i.e. the right position, the right place and/or the right time. Coulson-Thomas (2012) suggests that individuals who excel in a particular position/job may struggle in other related jobs. Groysberg et al. (2006) research on the transferability of excellent performance indicates that talent, indeed, is not all the time transferable from one organisational context to another and in some cases, performance might even 'plummet' when a so-called top performer swaps organisations.

2.2.3.2 Talent as people (Subject approach)

Talent can also be regarded as 'subject' — the 'who' of TM, embodied in people. Within the subject approach, there is an inclusive approach, i.e. talent construed as all employees of an organisation and an exclusive approach to the talent concept i.e. talent construed as an elite subset of an organisation's population (Preece et al, 2013).

(a)Talent as all people (Inclusive subject approach)

The inclusive approach is predicated on the premise that every employee has his or her own strengths and, given an opportunity to build and apply their knowledge and skills, can potentially create added value for the organisation (Devins & Gold, 2014). Peters (2006) contend that there is no justification not to regard each employee as talented. Likewise, O'Reilly and Pfeffer (2000) suggest that organisational success arises from "capturing the value of the entire labour pool, not just a few superstars" (p. 52). Despite being quite unclear, the inclusive dimension to talent is widely justified in the literature using the debate that in knowledge-based economies companies cannot achieve gains (or succeed otherwise) without their people (Tulgan, 2002). In today's business setting, it is mostly employees—i.e. not capital, not factories, not technology,—that are believed to create added value for organisations, in that they are now the chief determinant of organisational performance (Crain, 2009). In the services industry, for example, the whole business model is defined by and around the people employed—and as a result, defining talent as the entire workforce is not such a far stretch. In companies such as luxury hotels, frontline and behind-the-scenes employees play an equally significant part in delivering the high-quality service expected of this type of company (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005). Acknowledging the significance of context, Silzer and Dowell (2010) state that, "in some cases, talent might refer to the whole employee population" (p. 14).

(b)Talent as a selected few (Exclusive subject approach)

The exclusive approach is predicated on the compartmentalization of the workforce and the identification of a choice group of employees who rank at the top in terms of capacity and performance (Devins & Gold, 2014). This view sees talent as an elite subset of the organisation's population—i.e. those individuals who can make a difference or uniquely contribute to organisational performance, either through their instant contribution or in the longer-term by demonstrating the highest degrees of potential (Tansley et al, 2007). The subject approach is further broken down into talent as high potential and talent as high performance.

Talent as high potential: Some authors operationalize talent as a choice group of employees who demonstrate high degrees of potential (Gallardo et al, 2013). Potential is a commonly used term in the context of talent management and strategic HRM because it has initiated the curiosity of organisations and consulting firms equally (Silzer & Church, 2009). Potential means "the possibility that individuals can become something more than what they currently are" (Silzer & Church, 2009), meaning that it is dormant or not yet visible (Altman, 1997; Yost & Chang, 2009). This suggests that potential has a

partly innate basis but has to be developed to become manifest in exceptional performance. In general, potential is regarded a rare individual trait: Only a small percentage of the workforce usually gets identified as having high potential (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012).

Silzer and Church (2009) argue that in work environments, potential is generally used to indicate that an individual has the qualities (e.g., attributes, motivation, skills, abilities, and experiences) to productively perform and contribute in different or broader roles in the organisation at some point in the future (p. 379). High potential employees, then, are those individuals believed to have the potential to progress at a faster rate than their peers, whilst demonstrating different needs, motivations, and behaviours than 'regular' employees (Pepermans et al, 2003). Tansley (2011) suggested that talent in large organisations is linked to those individuals who display the most potential to advance to more senior roles, particularly leadership positions. These may be leadership or management-based or in a different function or even field. In this instance, talent as high potential can be seen as someone with the ability, engagement and aspiration to progress to and succeed in more senior, more critical positions.

Talent as high performers: Contrary the opinion that talent denotes potential or possibilities for the future, talent can also be understood as a construct that becomes manifest in current actions and behaviours, or, in a nutshell, performance (Altman, 1997). Talent in this regard is defined by achieved outputs, and not, as in other approaches to talent, by the inputs that are essential to accomplishing a certain output (e.g., knowledge, skills, and abilities). Since performance outputs can be assessed more easily than input factors like potential, it is a widespread organisational practice to use performance appraisals for the purpose of talent identification (Dries & Pepermans, 2008). Furthermore, the significance of employee performance is reflected in the literature on forced ranking approaches in which the relative ultimate performers are extensively rewarded whereas the relative worst performers are put on improvement programme or sacked (Grote, 2005; Welch & Welch, 2005).

More often than not, the subject approach to talent equates the term talent to high performers —i.e., "the best of class" (Smart, 2005). Stahl et al. (2007), for instance, define talent as a choice group of employees who rank at the top in terms of capacity and performance; Silzer and Dowell (2010) as a group of employees within an organisation who are outstanding in terms of skills and abilities either in a specific technical area, a specific competency, or a more general area; and Williams (2000) as

those people who demonstrate outstanding ability and accomplishment in an array of activities and situations, or within a specific field of expertise, on a regular basis.

Tansley (2011) suggested that traits most frequently linked with talented individuals include; high degrees of expertise; leadership behaviours; creativity; and initiative arising from a "can do attitude" based on self-belief. The degrees of performance needed from individual talent will naturally depend on the requirements of the organisation and the nature of the work. In public sector organisations for instance, as a result of the dominance of modernisation programmes, organisations may see talented individuals as those who manifest high performance in leadership behaviours or those who draw upon high levels of competence in a specialist area. In contrast, private sector organisations may see talented individuals in terms of expertise, initiative and creativity.

Smart (2005) argues that high performers are the one most crucial drivers of organisational performance since they 'contributes more, innovate more, work smarter, display more resourcefulness, earn more trust, take more initiative, articulate their vision more passionately, develop better business strategies, implement change more effectively, display greater teamwork, deliver higher-quality work, and find ways to get the job done in less time and at less cost' (pp. 5–6). Advocates of optimum grading—i.e., the practice of attempting to fill 75% (and preferably 90%) of all positions in the organisation with high performers—contend that the best way to overtake competitors is to engage top performers at all strata in the organisation (e.g., Michaels et al, 2001).

2.3 WHAT IS TALENT MANAGEMENT?

Talent management is becoming more commonly used in organisations and lately has increasingly drawn attention from academics and practitioners as a relatively new managerial concept. Despite the growth and popularity of TM, scholars have noted that the lack of clarity and consistency as regards the definition, scope and goals of talent management remains the main challenge for the development of the field of TM (Bethke-Langenegger et al, 2011; Lewis & Heckman, 2006). Interestingly, Huang and Tansley (2012) noted that though the literature on the war for talent is quite specific as to why talent management matters or its importance, it is much less specific on what talent management is, exactly. Moreover, the bulk of publications on talent management do not give a formal definition of their fundamental concept (Lewis & Heckman, 2006), nor does a large proportion of organisations that have a talent management system in place have a formal definition as to what this term means in their different organisations (Larsen et al, 1998; Warren, 2006).

McDonnell et al. (2010) observed that researchers vary significantly in their understanding of what forms talent management. Dries (2013) observed that there is the tendency of the talent management literature to slide off into vague but attractive rhetoric and this is causing commentators to doubt whether talent management is not just a management fashion. Some commentators (e.g. Adamsky, 2003) are of the opinion that TM is simply a refurbishing of old ideas under a new name—'old wine in new bottles'. Many of the primary ideas promulgated by TM practitioners, such as assessment centres, succession planning and 360-degree feedback, are not new, arising from the 1950s (Cappelli, 2008; Iles et al,2010). In some ways, talent management has become another term for human resource management and nothing more. For example, there are suggestions that some organisations are considering renaming the HR department as a talent management department (Sizler & Dowell, 2010).

On the other hand, others (Chuai et al. 2008; CIPD, 2007; Duttagupta, 2005) contend that there is something basically different from HRM under the TM label —it is not simply a management fashion or fad, they concluded that talent management does, in fact, add value over other strategic human resource management (SHRM) practices (i.e., the design and implementation of a set of internally consistent policies and practices which make sure that a firm's human capital contributes to the accomplishment of its business objectives). Collings and Mellahi (2009) argue that talent management varies from HRM in that it is believed to be less egalitarian and more elitist by definition.

Tarique and Schuler (2010) noted that TM could be understood as an integral part of HRM; nevertheless, it focuses on a smaller subset of employees (referred to as talent) relative to HRM practices, which are designed for all employees and also include the views of stakeholders such as customers, investors and unions. Therefore, TM covers only those activities that draw, develop and keep talented employees, and it neglects matters such as collective bargaining and labour relations, HR planning, compensation and benefits (Lewis & Heckman 2006; Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright 2010; Dowling, Festing & Engle, 2013; Festing, Kornau, & Schafer, 2014).

While many authors presume that talent management is part of the general HRM strategy of an organisation, Creelman (2004) posits that talent management is best seen as a mindset (i.e. an all-encompassing characteristic of an organisation, much like organisational culture) whereby talent is at the forefront of organisational success. In fact, many organisations seem unwilling to explicitly define what talent management does and does not include, calling it a mindset because they like to use the term 'talent'

as a euphemism for 'people' in light of their employer branding (Lewis & Heckman, 2006).

Cappelli (2008:74) states that it "is simply a matter of anticipating the need for human capital and then setting out a plan to meet it." Blass (2007:3) posits that it refers to "additional management processes and opportunities that are made available to people in the organisation who are considered to be talent." Others (see Heinen & O'Neill, 2004; Piansoongnern et al, 2008), recommend that it involve integrated HR practices designed to draw and keep the right people in the right jobs at the right time. The clearest deduction from these viewpoints is that there is nothing definite about talent management (Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Tarique & Schuler, 2010). Tansley et al. (2007: 9) define TM as "the systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement/retention and deployment of those individuals with high potential and who are of particular value to an organisation." According to Hatum (2010), talent management can be regarded as a strategic activity that is aligned with the company's business strategy and aims at drawing, building up, and keeping people at each stratum of the organisation. Talent management is therefore not just a process of managing people or disparate human resource management processes and systems, but instead, an integrated and thorough approach to managing the abilities, competencies, skills, needs, concerns, careers, fears and expectations of the people that an organisation values and requires to make competitive (Elegbe, 2010). Table 2.2 shows some definitions of TM.

Table 2.2 Definitions of talent management found in some HRM literature

Sources	Definition of Talent Management
Sloan, Hazucha, & Van Katwyk (2003)	"Managing leadership talent strategically, to put the right person in the right place at the right time" (p. 236)
Pascal (2004)	'Talent management includes managing the supply, demand, and flow of talent through the human capital engine' (p. 9)
Ashton & Morton (2005)	"TM is a strategic and holistic approach to both HR and business planning or a new route to organisational effectiveness. This improves the performance and the potential of people—the talent—who can make a measurable difference to the organisation now and in future. Moreover, it aspires to yield enhanced performance among all levels in the workforce, thus allowing everyone to reach his/her potential, no matter what that might be" (p. 30)

Duttagupta (2005)	"In the broadest possible terms, Talent Management is the strategic management of the flow of talent through an organisation. Its purpose is to assure that a supply of talent is available to align the right people with the right jobs at the right time based on strategic business objectives" (p. 2)
Warren (2006)	"In its broadest sense, the term can be seen as the identification, development, engagement, retention and deployment of talent, although it is usually used more narrowly to describe the short and longer-term resourcing of senior executives and high performers" (p. 26)
Jerusalim & Hausdorf (2007)	"High potential identification and development (also known as talent management) refers to the process by which an organisation identifies and develops employees who are potentially able to move into leadership roles sometime in the future" (p. 934)
Cappelli (2008)	"At its heart, talent management is simply a matter of anticipating the need for human capital and setting out a plan to meet it" (p. 1)
Collings & Mellahi (2009)	"activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions which differentially contribute to the organisation's sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high potentials and high-performing incumbents to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents and to ensure their continued commitment to the organisation" (p. 2)
Silzer & Dowell (2010)	"TM is an integrated set of processes, programmes, and cultural norms in an organisation designed and implemented to attract, develop, deploy, and retain talent to achieve strategic objectives and meet future business needs" (p. 18).

Source: Adapted from Dries (2013).

2.3.1 Definition of TM for this thesis

Although researchers and HR practitioners vary significantly in their understanding of what talent management really is, it is assumed that TM brings something different to the field of HRM in that it represents a more focused strategic approach to investing in human capital which is considered the most valuable assets of organisations in achieving

competitive advantage (Chuai et al. 2008; CIPD, 2007). In this sense, scholars (see Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Swailes, 2013) argue that TM is less egalitarian and more elitist by definition and it is mostly directed at a small proportion of the workforce.

For the purpose of this thesis, TM is defined as a strategic activity designed to attract, identify, develop and retain individuals regarded as 'talented', who are valuable and able to make a significant impact on an organisation's performance and competitiveness. From this definition, talent management can be seen as a coherent, integrated systems and practices used to provide added value for the organisation (Silzer & Dowell, 2010).

2.3.2 Talent Management Processes

From the earlier discussion and definition of talent management adopted for this study, the practice of TM entrenches the significance of attracting, identifying, developing and retaining people i.e. high-potential employees, the strategically important employees, or employees who are considered the most valuable source of competitive advantage. These four key areas (attraction, identification, development and retention) of TM are reviewed in this section.

2.3.2.1 Attraction

"Talent management can be usefully conceived as a pipeline through which individuals pass. The starting point of the pipeline is attraction – making and showing the organisation to be a desirable place to work" (Stewart, 2008:5). Due to the rising competition for talent in many sectors, companies are compelled to sharpen their marketing strategies to potential employees so as to position themselves as an employer of choice (Hieronimus et al, 2005). As observed by CIPD (2012), the ability of organisations to draw external talent relies upon how potential applicants see the organisation, the industry or sector in which it operates and whether they share the values of that organisation. As a result, the creation of an appealing employer brand is an important factor in employing talent. Davies et al. (2007) contend that organisations should have a brand soul that conveys three messages about the company; the company is a good company to work for, a company to stay with and a company building for the future. Stahl (2007) posits that for an organisation to maximise its brand, the company must consider recruits as clients, use sophisticated marketing analysis to identify its major competitors, determine which corporate characteristics matter most to specific recruits and understand how to reach those clients.

Furthermore, to draw the best people, Hatum (2010) posited that it is essential for an organisation to have an employee value proposition (EVP). Michael et al. (2001:43)

defines 'an employee value proposition as the holistic sums of everything individuals experience and receive while they are part of a company- everything from the intrinsic satisfaction of the work to the environment, colleagues, leadership, compensations and more'. It is about how well the company fulfils peoples' needs, their expectation and even their dreams'. These are the sets of gains that characterises an employer and what employees can expect to get from the organisation in exchange for the work they do. A good EVP improves the organisation's stature as a good place to work and drives talent attraction and retention (Hatum, 2010).

Purcell et al. (2003) on the basis of their longitudinal research in 12 companies concluded that: What seems to be occurring is that successful firms are able to satisfy people's needs both for a good job and to work 'in a great place'. They provide friendly and enabling working environment. In this way, they become an 'employer of choice'. People will want to work there, because their individual needs are satisfied – for a good job with chances connected to training, appraisal, and working with a good boss who listens and gives some independence but helps with coaching and guidance. Creating a great place to work should start with developing the image of the organisation so that it is perceived as one that achieves results, delivers quality products and services, behaves morally and provides good conditions of employment. Organisations with a definite vision and an array of integrated and enacted values are more likely to project themselves as being well-worth working for (Armstrong, 2006).

2.3.2.2 Identification

Despite the increase in the adoption of talent management practices a large number of organisations still struggle to fill key positions. The identification of talented employees, therefore, remains a key challenge (McDonnell et al., 2010). Mellahi and Collings (2010) contend that the availability of talented individuals is of little strategic value in an organisation if such talents are not identified, nurtured and used effectively. This implies that although organisations may have talented employees but until such employees are identified, developed and put into strategic use as a source of continuous competitive advantage, the value of unidentified talented individuals within the organisation remains low. Moreover, McDonnell (2011) observed that having identified the roles that have the greatest effect on the business strategy, organisations need to identify the right people to occupy them because a misidentification can mean square pegs are placed in round holes, with adverse consequences for organisations such as the events demonstrated in the fall of Enron (see Michaels et al, 2001).

Organisations embrace a variety of approaches and tools in the identification of talents, and these include the use of a competency framework/profile, performance management, HR planning, 360-degree feedback, strategic talent reviews (McDonnell, 2011; Silzer & Dowell, 2010; Tansley et al, 2007). Makela et al. (2010) observed that anecdotal evidence suggests talent reviews are gradually more used in conjunction with performance appraisals in a talent identification process and these evaluations typically include senior management (HR and top management) who attempt to establish the potential of the employee. They go beyond a line manager's assessment of an employee by determining the competencies required in higher order positions and establishing the difference between the competencies required in those and what the employee presently possesses (Makela et al, 2010)

McDonnell (2011) perceived that there had been a shift to the use of competency profiles in identifying talent in recent past. Competency-based practices are common among large and mid-sized employers as a fundamental tool for talent selection, retention, and development (Gangani et al, 2006). A competency model is an explanatory tool that identifies the skills, knowledge, personal characteristics, and behaviours required to effectively perform a role and help the business meet its strategic objectives (Lucia and Lepsinger, 1999). Gangani et al. (2006) suggested that in a competitive and frequently changing business environment, competency models may be able to assist human resource professionals in improving the skills set and efficiency level of their workforce to make changing market trends in order to face competitive business challenges. Although organisations adopt a variety of approaches and tools in the identification of talent, Hirsh (2000) argue that most organisations identify their talent and future potential by line managers' judgments. Giving direct line managers the sole responsibility for identifying talent can lead to unfairness in the selection process because of the risk of bias.

McDonell et al. (2011) identified some key challenges facing the talent identification process as follow; the identification practices that should be applied and who should be involved in this process; ensuring that people from all areas of the organisation and of varied backgrounds are included in the TM system; the probability of leaning too heavily on an individual (underplaying the importance of team working); and how organisations get the exact balance and blend between internal and external talent (not exaggerating external talent over internal employees which may result in demotivation). In identifying talented employees, organisations should strive to adopt multiple selection methods such as boxed performance and potential matrices, HR planning, 360-degree feedback, strategic talent reviews to enhance the organisation ability to identify the best talent both

within and externally and to minimize bias (see McDonnell, 2011; Silzer & Dowell, 2010; Tansley et al. 2007).

2.3.2.3 Development

Developing talent is an essential component of any talent management strategy. It has substantial potential benefits directly through skills development and improvement and also significant value indirectly through its positive contribution to other components of a talent management strategy such as attracting and retaining talent (Stewart, 2008). Developing high-potential employees and growing future leaders remain the most common aims of talent management activities (CIPD, 2014). Talent development signifies an important component of the overall talent management process (Cappelli, 2009; Novations, 2009). Organisations employ a large variety of development strategies in talent management. There is clearly a link between the forms of skills being created and the methods employed – such as technical versus leadership versus professional. Methods also differ depending on the phase of career development. A valuable classification of various approaches is the extent of formality. Some talent development approaches depend on formal methods, while others are informal, and this is often connected to various focuses and various phases in careers of workers (Stewart, 2008).

The processes used to generate skills by organisations include Internal courses, Individual work projects, Allocation to project teams, Sabbaticals, Action learning sets, E-learning resources, External seminars and conferences, External secondments, and Self-directed learning (CIPD, 2007). Garavan et al. (2012) suggested that the forms of programmes that organisations employ to build talent fall into four primary classes:

(1) Formal programmes: These encompass a wide range of strategies with conceptual and skill-based development programmes, personal growth development programmes, feedback-based development interventions and action focused development interventions (Conger, 2010). Development as part of talent management has to be focused, planned and to a level formalised (Stewart, 2008) and the bulk of formal programmes are designed to improve generic skills and behaviours (Garavan et al., 2012).

(2) Relationship based developmental experiences: Relationships are progressively regarded to be essential to the talent development process (McCauley & Douglas, 2004; Rock & Garavan, 2006). According to Lombardozzi and Casey (2008), the methods in developmental relationships includes a repetitive interplay between specific designer-led learning activities, learner-led activities interaction with others and learner action and cognition processing. They represent a key and

successful talent development strategy as development occurs in context, and learning is entrenched in the learners' work. Relationship based developmental experiences provide a mix of developmental functions, such as sponsorship, coaching, mentoring, psycho-social support and guidance (Friday et al, 2004)

(3) Job-based developmental experiences: Job experiences are oftentimes taken for granted as a means of developing talented employees (Van Velsor & Guthrie, 1998; Garavan et al, 2009), but in reality job experience are a major source of development in organisations, although they are often seen as opportunities to accomplish work (Garavan et al., 2012). Job-based developmental experience involves considerable degrees of self-confidence on the side of the learner, and a climate and culture in the organisation where identification of job activities is recognised as development opportunities for talents (Garavan et al, 2012). Using work based methods, such as coaching and mentoring is prevalent. Less prevalent methods such as external secondments have considerable potential (Stewart, 2008).

(4) Informal/Non-formal developmental activities: Though the bulk of the talent development literature underscores formal development strategies (Garavan et al, 2012). Stewart (2008) contends that when it comes to developing the skills of the talented, informal methods are equally as important as formal methods. The contingent nature of work in organisations indicates that talent development strategies should also concern the informal and non-formal methods and these needs to be identified and acknowledged in encouraging skills development via policy interventions (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Informal development is unplanned, ad-hoc with no definite results. It is largely experiential (Stewart, 2008).

2.3.2.4 Retention

In a CIPD (2014) annual report, retention of strategic workers was observed to be a major objective of talent management activities particularly in private sector organisations. Hughes and Rog (2008) noted that the retention of talented individuals in helping a firm create a unique source of competitive edge is arguably one of the key purposes of talent management. Talent retention strategies help organisations maintain and grow, preventing wasteful expenses sparked by the loss of talent (Bhattacharyya, 2015). Losing talented workers represents a considerable cost to an organisation (Lawler, 2005). Bhattacharyya (2015) argue that it is of tactical essence for organisations to keep talented employees, as failure to do so will have unfavourable implications on the

organisation. For example, the process of replacing talent may not be easy; a high performer who quits can be useful to competitor; high talent attrition thins organisational brand value; newly employed personnel need time to adapt; loyalty and commitment from the freshly acquired talent are not time-tested, and when identified talent departs, others may follow.

Organisations use a variety of strategies to keep their talent, and these include; upgrading compensation and benefits, promotions, special assignments, opportunities to learn, and status incentives (Kupperschmidt, 2000; Swoboda, 1999). There are also a number of non-monetary rewards organisations adopt to keep treasured employees, such as enhanced flexibility in work-at-home options, control over their schedules, and additional opportunities to improve skills and knowledge during work period or via employer-funded educational programmes (D'Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008). Employee retention programmes give attention to developing attractive benefits packages, which often contain features such as holiday pay, scheduled adjustments, and competitive reward. Nevertheless, benefits packages are not adequate to address turnover issues, and hence, keeping talent demands a long-term strategic focus on three essential elements namely; compensation and rewards, organisational identity, careers and employability (Hatum, 2010). Bhattacharyya (2015) contends that for retention to be boosted, organisations should welcome certain proactive talent management practices such as employee engagement, empowerment, career development opportunities, competitive compensation and benefits, among others, as well as sustaining a positive brand or reputation in the labour market.

2.4 FUNCTIONAL ROOTS OF THE TALENT MANAGEMENT CONCEPT

Sparrow et al. (2014) argue that it is of paramount to consider the functional roots from which the practice of talent management has developed. They posit that for most organisations, practitioner's and academics, the roots of talent management regarding current practice originates from Human Resource Management. A succinct consideration is given to the historical development of HRM in this thesis in order to shed more light on the development of TM.

2.4.1 A brief historical development of HRM

The foundation of the HRM model is based on the notion of the welfare of employees, as first understood in the 1940s with the use of welfare officers in organisations (Carey, 1999). The expressions 'human resource management' (HRM) and 'human resources' (HR) have generally replaced the term 'personnel management' as a description of the

methods involved in managing people in organisations (Armstrong, 2006). A synopsis of the development stages of HRM is presented in Table 2.3

Table 2.3 Development stages of HRM

Development stages	Description
Welfare and Administration (1900 to 1940s)	Represents an era complementary the establishment of the human resource management profession
	Line managers and supervisors performed personnel management functions
	Personnel management functions were fragmented
Welfare, administration, staffing and training (the 1940s to mid-1970s)	Restricted to administration areas
	Beginning of specialist approach to personnel management
	Human relations theory
	Scientific management
	Behavioural science
	Resurgence of unionism
HRM and strategic HRM (the mid-1970s to late 1990s)	Influence of "excellence" theories
	Total quality management theories
	Move from personnel management to HRM
	Strategic focus on organisations' overall effectiveness
	Increased employment legislation
	Strategic approach to HRM – strategies and Policies.
SHRM in the new millennium	Likely that HRM concepts and roles of HR managers will change
	More attention to international HR models
	Thought leaders have implied that the new HRM will either specialise in value management, strategic partnering and establishing the HR architecture for organisational success or the devolvement of outsourcing traditional HR processes to line managers and external HR consultants, respectively

	Emphasis on talent management, knowledge management and human capital management.

Source: Adapted from Nankervis et al. (2008).

The welfare and administration phase (1900 to 1940s) in Table 2.3 represents a period before the setting up of the human resource management profession, line managers and supervisors performed personnel management functions, which were fragmented and limited to administration areas (Nankervis et al., 2008). Davidson et al. (2011) observed that this period of HRM identifies a rigid and mechanistic method simply dealing with the mechanics of having employees and the need to hire, pay, and fire. Line managers executed this function with administrative assistance. This approach places importance on the drive for productivity rather than on individual employees.

Between the 1940s and the mid-1970s, staffing and training were integrated into the welfare and administration phase, and this was the commencement of the specialist approach to personnel management and this period experienced the rebirth of unionism and behavioural science. In management theory, the HR movement began to make altogether impact with the Hawthorne experiment and the neo-HR approach that revealed that the way in which employees were treated and consideration of their motivations were key factors in attaining productivity (Nankervis et al, 2008).

From the 1970s through to the 1990s there was a substantial focus placed upon the quality and strategic outcomes of HRM. This period witnessed a fundamental change in both the context and content of people management (Davidson et al, 2011). There was a move from personnel management to HRM with a strategic focus on overall effectiveness and was represented to a large extent by a general management view of holistic approaches, the Japanese approach and systems management of employees working with the firm as a whole (Nankervis et al., 2008; Davidson et al, 2011). The new millennium in HR as noted by Davidson et al. (2011) saw an emphasis on talent management, high-performance workplaces, and the re-evaluation of what strategic HR meant in terms of structure. Human capital and knowledge management became vital themes for organisations. Contingency theory in management arose, with the understanding that there was no best way, and situational variables determined the type of formal structure a company would implement.

The development of HRM has been criticised by some scholars (see Blyton & Turnbull, 1992; Price, 1997) who argue that there is no major difference in the concepts of personnel management and HRM and that in most organisations HRM is a mere relabelling of personnel management. Guest (1987) pointed out that 'a number of

personnel departments have become 'human resource departments' without any noticeable change in roles, just as the new editions of several age-old textbooks have changed the title but little else'. Armstrong (1987) argues that some personnel managers view HRM as just a set of initials or old wine in new bottles. It could very much be no more and no less than another term for personnel management, but as often perceived, at least it has the merit of underlining the virtue of treating individuals as an essential resource, the management of which is the direct concern of senior management as part of the strategic planning activities or processes of the enterprise.

On the other hand, some analysts (see Keenoy, 1990; Legge, 1999; Storey, 1993; Armstrong 2010) have underlined the revolutionary nature of HRM and argue that major differences do exist between HRM and personnel management. For example, Storey (1989:4) describes HRM as being 'a radically new approach to managing people, demarcated sharply from traditional personnel management'. He further contends that 'personnel' is a detached and neutral approach to staff, while HRM is more proactive and strategic, looking at people in economic perspectives as assets and liabilities to be actively managed.

2.4.2 From HRM to Talent Management

Sparrow et al. (2014) emphasised two trajectories followed by HR practitioners, consultants, and academics in the growth of talent management practices. In the first perspective, they argue that there were efforts to show return on investment on human capital and that the intellectual roots of talent management were initially in the HR planning movement of the 1980s and 1990s, with its emphasis on forecasting of staffing needs to meet corporate needs, planning and managing staffing needs, succession planning, and short -term management of development moves. Iles (1997) suggested that the notion of the war for talent is rooted in the assumption that in the current knowledge economy, traditional sources of competitive advantage are losing their edge whereas human talent is a renewable resource not easily copied or stolen by competitors. Mirroring the human capital theory, Gubman (1998) observed that assertions were being made that investment in talented employees resulted in substantial financial benefit for organisations. In view of this, Sparrow et al. (2014) suggested that there were two notable capabilities that facilitated the conversion of a human capital planning cycle into a talent management system and these include:

1. Measuring the effect that human capital (talent) had on the ability to execute an organisation's business processes through analysing best practices. In this case, the impact of talent on processes needs to be analysed in terms of whether it

helps to decrease operating expenses and product or service costs, did it shorten the cycle time of key processes, could people do more with less through the procedures involved, were the number of errors or defects reduced, were customers or employees more fulfilled, and so forth.

2. The use of the forward-looking dexterity of trending, predicting and forecasting of talent need in organisations. Fitz-enz (2000) saw this requirement to forecast, plan, and ensure a constant pipeline of talent, as a necessary yet dangerous art, but a controllable one. An example of definition coming from this human capital perspective defines talent management as 'the process by which employers anticipate and meet their needs for human capital' (Cappelli, 2008:1).

Sparrow et al. (2014) also argued that the incorporation of resourcing career development traditions into a life-cycle viewpoint, applied in the first instance to a small group of high-value managers was a second direction charted by scholars and practitioners in the growth of talent management. As job mobility and career change are becoming increasingly more common, organisations are increasingly looking for how best to manage talented employees as a source of competitive advantage (Weng & McElroy, 2010). Although recruitment of all levels of employees has been a key HR activity for many years, a careful focus on career development was seen as a later development happening around the late 1980s and early 1990s. From this perspective, Savickas (2011) notes that whereas in the past an individual's career rested in the hands of an organisation, today individuals own their own careers. For example, individuals who lack career development and advancement opportunities within their current organisation are left with little choice but to look to other organisations as a means for personal career growth (Wang et al. 2014) and some recent research (see Weng & McElroy, 2012; Weng et al, 2010) shows that employees experiencing high levels of career growth within their current employment express more organisational commitment and less intention to leave.

By the late 1990s and early 2000s, the use of talent management as a brand in its own right became prominent with debate focusing on how organisations could identify, develop, sustain, and manage talent pools; engrain a talent mind-set in the values of an organisations; align various HR programmes and processes to the needs of talent; and comprehend the time needed to pursue talent strategies that balanced recruitment versus the development of talent (Sparrow et al, 2014).

In the late 1990s to early 2000s, the field of talent management began to emerge and advance its own identity especially after the war for talent narrative by Michaels et al.

(2001) and for the majority of organisations talent management came to function around a few core technologies and tools notably systems that categorize people as talented based on assessments of their performance and potential. Subsequently, management boards in different organisations became increasingly conscious of the need to manage talented employees in terms of competitive advantage and the portfolio of duties for many talent directors changed to include the identification of high-potential, critical role/gap analysis, succession planning, external search and recruitment, and in some organisations talent directors became involved in management and strategic workforce planning (Sparrow et al, 2014). For many organisations, the task of the head of resourcing developed into that of talent director who became a key player in the HR chain of command and in the boardrooms (Sparrow et al, 2011).

2.5 CONNECTING TM PROCESSES

Talent management programmes consist of a number of previously independent practice areas that covers attracting, developing, engaging, leveraging, and retaining top talent. In order for talent management initiatives to succeed in adopting organisations, each individual practice area must function successfully. At the same time, there must be effective and appropriate integration among the independent practice areas in the talent management process (Sizler & Dowell, 2010). As such, Hatum (2010) argues that many organisations still consider talent management to be a linear process in which the attraction, development and retention activities are seen as different practice areas and that a lack of connections between them makes the whole process of talent management internally unstable and consequently, poorly aligned with firm's total business strategy. He suggested (see Fig. 2.1) that for a talent management strategy to be successful, it should be regarded as a process in which attraction, development, and retention are interconnected and that while each angle has its own uniqueness, their co-ordinated interaction is crucial for the coherence of the whole process, and this will, in turn, cause better performance of the firm.

Fig.2.1 The dynamic model of talent management
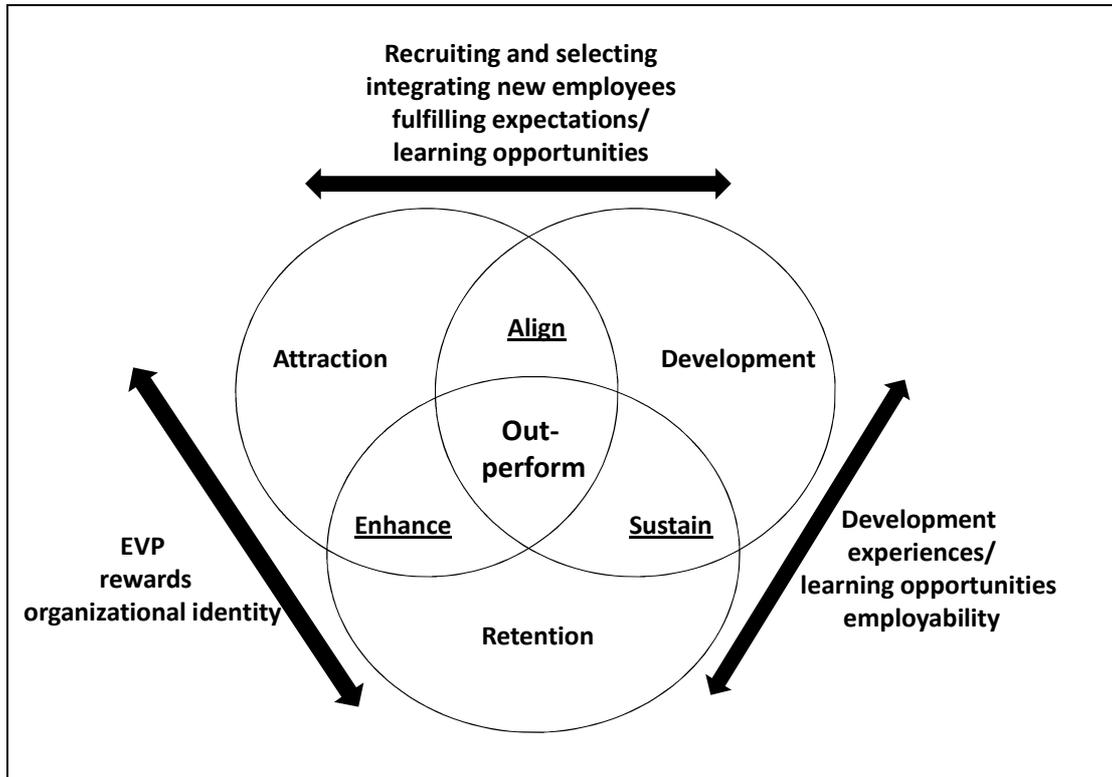
Source: Adapted from Hatum (2010).

In Fig 2.1, the link between attraction and development represents the ability of the firm to support strategy by orientating an organisation's people, practices and processes with the success of strategic matters. The link between development and retention represents the ability of the organisation to retain a long-term relationship with their workers. In this regard, the role of employee development is crucial to maintaining a long-term relationship, as organisations that provide sustainable learning give not only employment but also employability, which makes remaining at the company more desirable. 'Enhance', or the link between attraction and retention, represents the ability of the organisation to raise both attraction and retention through values and actions that improve the desirability of working and remaining in the company. Therefore, the company's external image and internal organisational identity are closely related, which in turn works to both attract and keep talented employees.

'Outperform', or the domain in which attraction, development, and retention all overlap, represents the ability of the firm to deliver a holistic talent management strategy that backs overall business strategy, and in turn, helps the organisation to realise strong performance in the market environment. Fig 2.1 captures how integrating attraction,

development, and retention can bring about or lead to out-performance by creating a dynamic model of managing talented employees within an organisation. This means that an organisation has a single, coherent policy that brings each of these areas (attraction, development and retention) altogether. Such coherence is realised through consistency across the various areas.

The above point is echoed by an analysis of talent management practices in 37 multinational companies (Stahl et al, 2007). They explained that those companies that excel at talent management ensured internal consistency, complementarity, and reinforcement of the practices implemented to attract, develop, and retain talent. Furthermore, they demonstrated that focus on consistency enables these firms to align talent management with corporate culture, business strategy, and long-term goals. Hence, Stahl et al. (2007) posit that competitive edge comes not just from designing and implementing best practices but instead from an internal alignment of talent management practices, as well as the firm's value system and strategy. Becker et al. (1997) argued that inconsistency across talent management practice areas can lead to a situation known as organisational schizophrenia, which lowers trust in the talent management programme and which can be disastrous to the success of the entire talent management model.

2.6 EXCLUSIVE AND INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO TALENT MANAGEMENT

Some scholars (see Iles et al., 2010; Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Stahl et al, 2012) suggest that talent management can either have an exclusive or inclusive focus. While many scholars promote exclusive talent management approaches that are directed at a small, elitist proportion of workforce only- the A players, high potentials, high performers or strategically important workforce (Boudreau & Ramstand, 2005; Collings & Meellahi, 2009), others support inclusive talent management approaches that are focused at the entire workforce (Buckingham & Voyburg, 2001; Yost & Chang 2009). Stahl et al. (2012) proposed that in addition to exclusive and inclusive approaches to talent management, a hybrid method that combines inclusive and exclusive philosophies is attainable. Although recent research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 2012) shows that inclusive approaches are fairly common, Swailes (2013) contends that in practice, many organisations use exclusive approaches to talent management.

Talent management is usually positioned as a normative and exclusive practice that focuses on the development of a small fraction of high-performing and high-potential employees in an organisation (Gallardo-Gallardo et al, 2013; Swailes et al, 2014). Iles et al. (2010) observed that based on this viewpoint, it is impossible for everyone in the

organisation to be regarded as a talent and managed accordingly- talented employees are seen as basically different from others in terms of their present and past performance and competence, as well as their potential. Branham (2005) postulates the Pareto Principle that 20% of the workforce can contribute 80% of the value. According to Ledford and Kochanski (2004), a subdivision is critical to talent management, and successful organisations tend to have a powerful talent division.

Tansley et al. (2007) noted that there are consequences for talent strategy where talent management is seen to be focused on individuals whose performance show high leadership potential and who are placed in an elite sub-group of future leaders for the organisation. Concentrating solely on a targeted few rather than taking a more inclusive 'whole workforce' approach has both merits and demerits. Stewart (2008) suggested that an additional outcome is the potential negative impact on staff motivation and engagement of adopting what is referred to as an 'exclusive' approach to talent management. This means that only some employees are defined as talented and are able to get on talent development processes and programmes.

The other approach, referred to as 'inclusive', is one which sees all employees as talented somehow or at least potentially so. Inclusive approaches take an 'inclusive' position, often from 'humanistic' considerations, that potentially everyone in the organisation has 'talent', and that the job is to manage all employees to deliver high performance (Iles et al, 2010; Swailes et al, 2014). Stainton (2005) suggested that TM should employ a broad approach by acknowledging that everyone has the capacity and potential to demonstrate talent—thus everyone, for example, should go through the same talent identification process. Talent management programmes that use a more inclusive approach reflect an opinion that a broader spectrum of employees has talent to render the organisation (Tansley et al, 2007). The matter of exclusive versus inclusive is a big question in talent management and one with which many organisation decision makers struggle. There are of course merits and demerits, but in theory, inclusive approaches seem to generate more positive and fewer negative consequences than exclusive approaches (Stewart, 2008).

2.7 TALENT MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHIES

From previous research, Hartmann et al. (2010) identified four distinct research philosophies that are operational in the field of talent management. The first perspective on talent management concentrates primarily on the "collection of typical HRM practices, functions or activities" or professional areas such as recruiting, selection, progress, and career and succession management. Researchers of this stream (e.g. Blackman &

Kennedy, 2008; Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Schweyer, 2004) have a broad view of talent management. TM can be distinguished from the traditional HRM by being more considered and future-oriented, as well as in line with general corporate strategic goals. Thunnissen et al. (2013) noted that this philosophy labels regular HRM practices as talent management with some minor differences ('doing it faster or across the enterprise'). This research stream is related to the model that talent equals human capital; so, talent management equals HRM.

The second perspective on talent management interprets talented employees as valuable goods ("high potentials"), which need to be sought after, regardless of the specific needs of an organisation. Researchers of this stream (e.g. Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001; Smart, 2005) typically classify employees into top, middle and low performers and suggest that developmental activities should concentrate solely on top performers. Silzer and Dowell (2010) argue that under this philosophy, talent management is all about differentiation of employees into A, B, and C performers. This includes assessing the performance and potential of employees and pursuing an elite approach as against egalitarian approach to managing talents, i.e., investing in the A players by giving them promotion, incentives, and development opportunities, sustaining the potential of B players and acting decisively on C players (either quickly re-engaging or more likely removing them).

Of late some HR professionals and consulting firms also now argue the need for workforce separation to isolate particularly critical workforce segments centred on a combination of their needs as consumers of the talent system. For example what critical talent cares about most are based on some kind of strategic differentiation of their importance in the organisation, such as their contribution and their linkage to the value chain (O'Donnell, 2009; Watson Wyatt Worldwide, 2009). This philosophy as recognised by Lewis and Heckman (2006) focuses on talent generically without any regard to specific positions or organisational boundaries. Within this philosophy, there are two different points of view: the first focuses on talent with high potential or high-performing talent (the recruitment and development of 'A-performers') and the second view states that everyone has their own talents and that HR should help everyone achieve high performance (Thunnissen et al, 2013).

The third perspective sees talent management as "succession or human resource planning" which concentrates on the job flow of employees within an organisation (e.g. Barlow, 2006; Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005; Bryan, Joyce, & Weiss, 2006; Jackson & Schuler, 1990; Groves, 2007; Lewis & Heckman, 2006). This approach centres on the

internal rather than the external labour market, and typically starts with the identification and mobilisation of internal talent pools. Thunnissen et al. (2013) observed that this stream of the talent management literature focuses primarily on the concept of talent pools and regards talent management as a process to ensure an adequate flow of employees throughout the organisation. Scholars see a great deal of similarity with succession planning or human resource planning intended to fill specific, mainly management positions.

The fourth perspective, which was incorporated more recently by Collings and Mellahi (2009), emphasises the identification of pivotal positions that have the potential to have an impact on the competitive advantage of an organisation. This perspective maintains that talent management should start with the identification of pivotal positions rather than of talented employees per se. Talented employees are subsequently recognised and developed to fill the previously identified pivotal talent positions (Hartmann et al, 2010). Pivotal positions are mostly classified into A, B and C positions and for Huselid, Beatty, and Becker (2005):

- 'A' positions are strategic, require autonomous decision-making, have performance-based compensation, create disproportionate value for the organisation as compared to other organisations, and the consequences of mistakes (in job design or in hiring the wrong employee) can have serious financial outcomes.

- 'B' positions are essentially support roles that may be strategic for the organisation but the skills required to execute them are common, and there may be little variability in the performance of individuals in these positions.

- 'C' positions may be required for the company to function but are not strategic to its success and may simply be outsourced or even weeded out.

The consequence of this TM philosophy is that talent management is no longer just linked to top-tier employees (Silzer & Dowell, 2010). These identified essential positions can be anywhere within an organisation and talent management becomes a company-wide strategy. These positions do not just comprise those near the strategic core of the organisation- they may be an important part of the operating core. Although the four talent management philosophies discussed above represent different conceptualizations or approaches to talent management practices i.e. competing or alternative approach to TM, Sparrow et al. (2014) suggest that putting these four philosophies into a framework can help organisations think about, and position the design of different organisational

talent management system and also determine when each should become most dominant rather than see the different philosophies as alternatives (see figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2 Matching different talent management philosophies
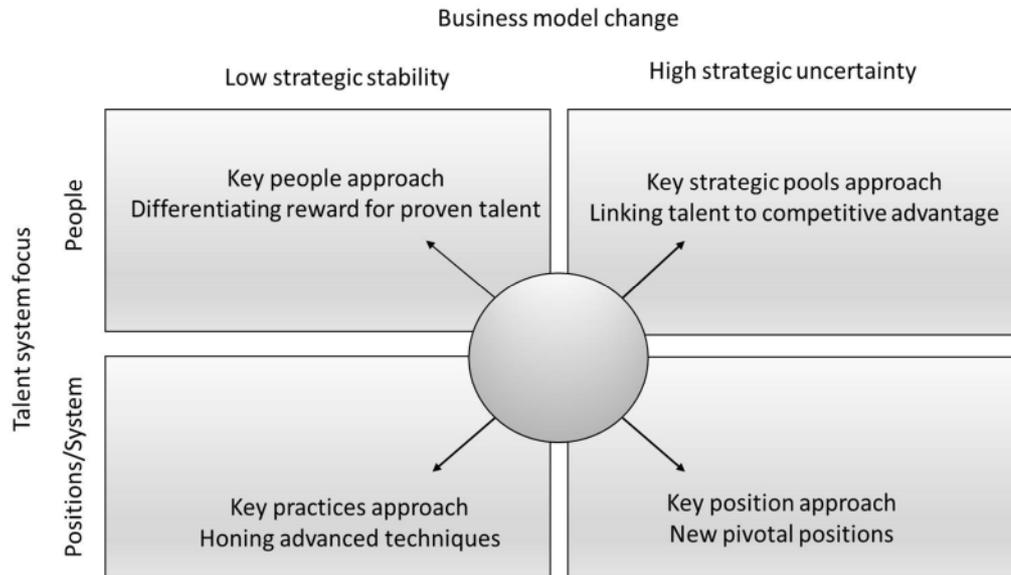
Source: Adapted from Sparrow et al, (2014).

Fig. 2.2 consist of two axes and the vertical axis relates to the talent system focus and involves looking at whether the focus of the talent management philosophy is in the management of certain segments of people i.e. differentiated employees approach and employees in the strategic talent pool or is more on the systems and practices that are used i.e. collection of HRM practice approach and pivotal position approach (Sparrow et al, 2014).

The horizontal axis is the business model change which is concerned with the level of change that is taking place in the organisation. For example, where there is a very high level of change in business condition, there is a need to analyse how competitive advantage is actually delivered through the business model, which parts of the organisation and pools of talent will have the most bearing upon organisational effectiveness. In this context, it becomes important to analyse the business model and identify from it from an organisational design perspective, which roles, positions, and jobs become central to the effective delivery of the strategy, almost regardless of the people in those jobs.

On the other hand, if the level of instability in the model change is low, i.e. where there is strategic stability, then it becomes easier for the organisation to predict what will constitute being talented and who will be successful. In this instance, the organisation

can, therefore, pursue a people approach to managing talented employees. The level of business model change in this regard will undoubtedly have a significant implication for the type of focus around talent management approach that is needed in the organisation (Sparrow et al, 2014).

The above model suggests that the four different TM approaches identified in literature (see Hartmann et al, 2010), should not be treated as competing TM strategies but as complementary strategies to the management of talented employees within the organisation. As such, organisations could employ a combination of approaches or apply different approaches at different stages depending on the prevailing circumstances in the organisation.

2.8 CRITIQUE OF TALENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Although there is so much hype about talent and talent management both in organisations and academic literature, some scholars (see Pfeffer, 2001; Ford et al, 2010), suggest that fighting the war for talent can have an unfavourable impact on the organisation and its employees. In some organisations, the fact that talent management means identifying a minority of individuals with the potential to fill critical organisational roles and to disproportionately invest attention and development to help those few people get there raises an ethical question (Swailes, 2013).

In some respects the word 'talent' appears very sensitive, for example in a survey by CIPD on talent, two-thirds of respondents thought the word talent could be de-motivating (CIPD, 2006). Therefore the practice of regarding a small group of employees as talented can be problematic because doing so can also be viewed as a dehumanizing act in relation to excluded employees and while many employees may be unconcerned that they have not been selected for a talent programme as they do not see themselves as future leaders, some may nevertheless feel excluded. Furthermore 'if members of the excluded group are harmed by these actions, done in the name of boosting organisational performance, the increases to which might be marginal, then there is an ethical problem' (Swailes, 2013). Assumptions and metaphors in TM often stress talent 'rarity' and 'conflicts' over sourcing it (e.g. the 'war' for talent), raising important social and ethical issues (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). Selecting a minority on the basis of distinct contribution can be de-motivating in relation to the majority; exclusion from talent pools can be interpreted as signalling inferiority (Iles, 2013).

Pfeffer (2001) argued that a mindset in an organisation that emphasised a fight to source talented individuals is hazardous and detrimental to the organisation's health. He contended that fighting the war for talent is a wrong approach to improving organisational

effectiveness (i.e., people, or stars, at the expense of systems) given the way people behave in organisations, and such a system would create a set of side effects that would nullify any gains made in the management of the so-called talented employees (Sparrow et al., 2014).

The key objections by Pfeffer (2001) to the war for talent concept in organisations include the following;

1). Placing so much emphasis on individual performance (i.e. rewarding the individual stars) reduces the value of teamwork, thereby creating unhealthy internal competition, and retarding learning and the spread of best practices inside the company. For example, the star approach to talent that gives prominence to individual performance at the expense of teamwork can give rise to a system that can create conflict between employees who otherwise need to work collaboratively. HR practices that go along with the star approach can make it hard for sharing of knowledge, ideas and expertise within the organisation.

2). Fighting the war for talent promotes the development of an elitist, arrogant attitude which encourages poor learning in organisations. For example, companies that think they are winning the war for talent assume they are so full of smart individuals that they know everything and this sort of attitude make the building of a wise organisation almost impossible. In wise organisations, people know what they know, and they know what they do not know. A celebration of individual brilliance of the 'A' players will encourage situations where a good idea from 'B' or 'C' players within the organisation becomes irrelevant.

3). In seeking the best talent available in a competitive labour market, there is a tendency of glorifying the talents of those outside the company and moderating the skills and abilities of employees inside the organisation, invariably leading to a loss of motivation on the part of those inside the firm and eventually to their turnover thereby making the recruitment challenges facing the organisation more acute. Organisations that embrace the star approach to the management of talent will rely so much on monetary incentives to attract key employees from outside the organisation as well as in retaining such coveted talent.

4). Categorising employees in the organisation can bring about the creation of a negative self-fulfilling prophecy where employees considered as less able (especially as a C player) actually become less able in relation to performance due to lower expectations from such employees in terms of their productivity and this results in less resources being made available to this employee group thereby leading to a state where the

organisation has too many people who are in the process of dropping out of the competitive fray which is the opposite of what happens with the 'A' players. The absence of development opportunities in organisations that embraces this approach to talent management leads to dissatisfaction and demoralisation of those not considered top talent and thus poor performance.

5). Fighting the war for talent can result in de-emphasising solving the systemic, cultural and business issues that are much more crucial for enhancing performance, as the organisation pursue success exclusively through getting the right people in place. This approach focuses the organisation on individuals i.e. not groups, teams, or the entire company with the presumption that there are better and worse ones, and there's not much to be done to change anyone. This perspective of talent management causes companies to disregard or downplay the importance of intervening to build cultures and systems that bring out the finest in everyone within the organisation.

Ford et al. (2010) also highlighted the negative side of talent management:

- Difficulties in identifying people who are 'talented'. There is no fool-proof way of identifying talent, so truly talented people may be overlooked, or those chosen may not have the potential they originally seemed to possess. For example, studies of multinational corporations show that those nearest to headquarters are more likely to be identified as talent than those in more far-flung enterprises (Mellahi & Collings, 2010).

- Unexpected outcomes: talent management programme raises expectations, and many will question the ability of the organisation to meet these expectations. For example, a misfit between numbers of talented employees developed and available posts may result in over-qualified people having to work in positions that require competence rather than exceptional abilities. The focus on the individual may have a negative impact on teamwork and may make those not included feel less able, value-less and expendable.

- Fitting talent management into the organisation: There is uncertainty about how to link talent management to strategy and concern about how equal opportunities and diversity policies are damaged by talent management programmes. The competitive nature of exclusive talent management strategies may not be conducive to more egalitarian organisational cultures.

- Credibility: many of the claims related to talent management are based on partial or self-reported data as opposed to rigorous research evidence or systematic evaluation.

- Impact on those not identified as 'talent' i.e. people not identified as talented may suffer a loss of morale, become demotivated, less efficient, and may leave the organisation.

2.9 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In a bibliometric and content analysis of publications and journals on talent management published between 2001 and 2014, Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2015) identified four dominant theoretical frameworks: Resource-based view (Human Capital), International Human resource management, Employee Assessment and Institutionalism. The theoretical perspective in the current research largely draws on Human Capital theory (HCT) and Institutional theory (IT).

Lepak and Snell (1999) suggested that articles written within an RBV framework tend to use the clear viewpoint of equating talent to 'human capital' that is both highly useful and special. In this regard, high-value human capital represents assets that are central to the organisation's main business, and uniqueness represents the degree to which the organisation's human capital would be hard to change (De Vos & Dries, 2013). This research draws on human capital theory because it can be linked to one of the key drivers to the adoption of talent management programmes. Scholars (see Brewster et al, 2008; McDonnell, 2009; Tarique & Schuler, 2010), argued that talent management as a practice focusing on the development of human resources could be theoretically explained by human capital theory (HCT).

Although the HCT is seen as the dominant theoretical framework in the adoption of talent management practices (Gallardo-Gallardo et al, 2015), this research also draws on institutional theory as a possible rival explanation of the adoption of talent management. As observed in the TM literature, institutional concept explains factors such as national and organisational culture, and existing power relations in organisations and labour markets that drive TM strategies, policies, and practices (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014). Scholars (see Bjokeman et al. 2007; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), view organisational institutionalism as a theoretical lens used to study the adoption and diffusion of organisational forms and practices with the main argument being that 'organisations are under social influence and pressure to adopt practices such as HRM that are viewed as being appropriate for the situation'. Using the theoretical lens of institutional theory for

this study offers some important insights into the adoption of talent management practices within organisations.

2.9.1 Human Capital Theory

The main factors of production in the 1950s consisted of physical capital, labour, land and management (Mincer 1962; Becker 1993). These four traditional factors of production were, however, deemed inadequate in explaining the economic growth experienced in the early 1960s. Schultz (1961) noted that the gap, known as the 'residual factor', was identified as 'human capital' and seen as the main contribution to the economic prosperity of nations. When Schultz gave his Presidential Address to the American Economic Association in 1960, he ushered what was later called 'Human capital revolution' (Bowman, 1966).

The American economist, Becker Gary (1964) building on the work of Theodore Schultz (1902-1998) in his path-breaking book on human capital extensively developed and formalised the theoretical derivation of the human capital theory. Although the focus of Shultz's work was initially designed to explain individual decisions in making training and education choices, human capital theory was quickly broadened to cover much wider economic decisions by individuals, including occupational choice, health care, migration and even planned family size, fertility, and mortality (Sobel, 1982). This theory conceptualises workers as embodying a set of skills which can be 'rented out' to employers' (Ehrenberg & Smith, 1997). The knowledge and expertise a worker has – which come from training and education, including the training that experience brings – create a certain stock of productive capital (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

The human capital theory states that the knowledge and skills that people acquire through education and training is a form of capital, and this capital is a product of deliberate investment that yields returns (Becker, 1993; Shultz, 1971). The fundamental principle underpinning human capital theory is the belief that peoples' learning capacities are of comparable value to other assets involved in the production of goods and services (Lucas 1988, 1990). When the resource is effectively utilised, the results are profitable for the individual, organisation and society at large (Schultz 1961).

Therefore, HCT seeks to explain the gains of education and training as a form of investment in human resources, and the main proposition is that people are considered a form of capital for development (Aliaga, 2001; Becker, 1993, Benhabib & Spiegel, 1994; Engelbrecht, 2003; Hendricks, 2002). From this perspective, education and schooling are seen as deliberate investments that prepare the labour force and increase the

productivity of individuals and organisations, as well as encouraging growth and development at the international level (Nafukho et al, 2004).

From these definitions of 'Human Capital Theory', the main outcome from investment in people is the change that is demonstrated at the individual level in the form of enhanced performance, and at the organisational level in the form of improved productivity and profitability or at societal level in the form of returns that benefit the entire society (Nafukho et al, 2004). The line of suppositions in HCT (Marginson 1993) entails that an individual gets knowledge and skills via education and training (i.e. human capital). These acquired capabilities and aptitudes build the individual's profitability in the work environment. This increment in productivity will bring about a higher compensation to the person since the wage of an individual in an optimal labour market, is controlled by the individual's efficiency and output. In this manner, individuals would put resources into training up to the point where the exclusive advantages of education are equivalent to the private expenses.

In light of these presumptions, the rationale of HCT is clear that education and training build human capital and this prompts a higher profitability rate, which thusly brings a higher compensation for the individual employee. Taking into account this train of thinking, it can be asserted that education and income are correlated and education and training ought to be advanced (Dobbs et al, 2008).

2.9.1.1 Human capital and complementary capitals

According to Schultz (1981:140) Adam Smith originated the idea of human capital when he wrote that: 'The acquired wealth of nations derives from the acquired abilities of people – their education, experience, skills and health.' In line with this thought, Armstrong and Taylor (2014) contends that 'individuals generate, retain and use knowledge and skill (human capital) and create intellectual capital. Their knowledge is enhanced by the interactions between them (social capital) and generates the institutionalised knowledge possessed by an organisation (organisational capital)'. The concept of human capital (HC) as noted by Baron and Armstrong, (2007) is therefore associated with the overarching notion of intellectual capital, and it is one of the three main elements of it; the other two being organisational capital and social capital. Wright et al. (2001) observed that this view is shared by others who argue that intellectual capital is a factor that comprises human capital, organisational capital and social capital i.e. intellectual capital = human capital + social capital + organisational capital.

2.9.1.2 Intellectual capital

As earlier noted, the stock of intellectual capital consists of human (the knowledge abilities and skills of individuals) social (the valuable relationships among people) and organisational (the processes and routines within the firm) and central to these ideas is that intellectual capital is embedded in both people and systems (Wright et al., 2001:716). Intellectual capital can be viewed as the intangible assets connected with individuals, which together with tangible resources (money and physical resources) amount to the total worth of an organisation (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014:69).

There is a multi-faceted definition of intellectual capital as suggested by intellectual capital theorists. Sveiby (1997) for example, proposed that knowledge-based assets could be found in three places: the competencies of organisation members, its internal structure (e.g. models, patents, administrative and computer assets) and external structure such as brands, relationships and reputation with clients (Rosmah et al, 2008). Gratton and Ghoshal (2003) contend that intellectual capital is part of human capital i.e. human capital subsumes intellectual capital, and also contains within it emotional capital and social capital. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998:245) explain that 'intellectual capital refers to the knowledge and knowing capability of a social collectively, such as an organisation, professional practice or intellectual community'.

In relation to talent management, Baron and Armstrong (2007) contend that it is the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals that create value for the organisation, and the focus has to be on the means of attracting, developing, retaining, and maintaining the human capital they represent. This individual knowledge is retained and put to use through knowledge management, and it is equally valuable to take into account social capital considerations, that is, the ways in which knowledge is developed through interactions between people.

2.9.1.3 Human capital

In a knowledge-based economy, people are considered as revenue creators rather than costs (Lawler, 2008) and as Wright and McMahan (2011:101) explained, each individual in the organisation has characteristics that comprise human capital. The individual also engages in the processing of information, interpretation and reaction to that information in making choices about how to feel and behave. In view of this, the aggregation of human capital constitutes the organisation or unit's 'human capital' (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

The concept and perspective of human capital emanate from the fact that there is no substitute for knowledge and learning, competencies and capabilities, creativity and innovation; and that they need to be relentlessly pursued and focused on the firm's competitive logic and environmental context (Rastogi, 2000:196). It is indeed the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals that create value, which is why the focus has to be on means of attracting, retaining, developing and maintaining the human capital they represent (Armstrong, 2006).

Medard et al. (2012) define human capital as 'the stock of competencies, knowledge and personality attributes embodied in the ability to perform labour, so as to produce economic value'. In principle, this includes innate abilities and skills acquired through education, training and experience. Bontis et al. (1999) argue that human capital represents the human factor in the organisation; the combined intelligence, expertise and skills that give the organisation its distinctive character. Therefore, human elements are those that are capable of learning, innovating, changing and providing the creative thrust which if strongly motivated can ensure the long-term survival of the organisation' (Armstrong, 2006). According to Dess & Picken (1999:8), human capital is 'generally understood to consist of the individual's capabilities, skills, knowledge and experience of the company's managers and employees, as they are pertinent to the current task, as well as the ability to add to this reservoir of skills, knowledge, and experience through individual learning'.

From the above definitions, human capital is rather broader in scope than human resources. In this respect the emphasis on knowledge is essential. Though the HR literature has a lot of things to say about knowledge, the argument is traditionally rooted in an individual level perspective, mainly concerning job-related knowledge. On the other hand, human capital literature has moved beyond the individual also to embrace the perception that knowledge (expertise) can be shared among groups and institutionalised within organisational routines and processes (Kulvisaechana, 2006). Human capital is important to organisations as a source of innovation and strategic renewal. Thus, a higher level of human capital is often associated with greater productivity and higher incomes or compensation for employees (Kong & Prior, 2008). Human capital increases through education and experience, and it is valuable to the extent to which it contributes to an organisation's competitive advantage by improving effectiveness and efficiency, exploiting opportunities or neutralising threat. They are the only resources that appreciate with use (Choudhury & Mishra, 2010). This perspective leads to a crucial point that the increase in the number of exceptionally talented people is not enough for the organisation. There must, in addition, be a desire on the part of people to invest their

expertise and skills in their position and the organisation. In other words, individuals must engage or commit to the organisation if the effective utilisation of human capital is to happen (Stiles & Kulvisaechana, 2003).

Medard et al. (2012) suggested that on a macro level, it is common to measure an economy's human capital by the proportion of enrolment in elementary, secondary schools and post-secondary institutions. It is assumed that high enrolment rates in institutions of education and training indicate that more people are acquiring human capital and that the workforce, as a whole, is becoming more productive. Indeed, countries with high enrolment rates in education and training institutions are more likely to enjoy higher living standards, higher productivity, and faster economic growth (Medard et al, 2012).

Human capital can be regarded as the prime asset of an organisation, and organisations need to invest in that asset to guarantee their survival and growth. In order for an organisation to harness its human capital, it should aim to ensure that they obtain and retain a skilled, committed and well-motivated workforce it needs (Armstrong, 2006). This means taking steps to assess and satisfy future people needs and to enhance and develop their inherent capacities, their contributions, potential and employability by providing learning and continuous development opportunities. It also means engaging in talent management – the process of acquiring and developing talent, wherever it is and wherever it is required, by utilising a number of interdependent HRM policies and practices in the fields of resourcing, performance management, learning and development and succession planning (Armstrong, 2006).

2.9.1.4 Social capital

Social capital is another aspect of intellectual capital. It consists of the knowledge derived from networks of relationships within and outside the organisation (Armstrong 2010). 'Fundamentally, intellectual capital is a social artefact, and that knowledge and meaning are always embedded in a social context both created and sustained through on-going relationships in such collectivities' (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). The concept of social capital was described by Putnam (1996:68) as 'the characteristics of social life – networks, trust and norms – that enable individuals to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives'. It is meaningful to take into account social capital considerations, i.e. the ways in which knowledge and skills are developed through interaction between people. Intellectual capital develops and evolves over time, and a critical part is played in these processes by people acting together (Armstrong, 2010).

From an organisational viewpoint, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998:243), define social capital as "the sum of the actual and potential resources entrenched within, available through, and derived for the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit'. Nahapiet & Ghoshal, further explained that 'the central proposition of social capital theory is that networks of relationships comprise a valuable resource for the conduct of social affairs…much of this capital is ingrained within networks of mutual acquaintances' (1998:243). According to Adler and Kwon (2002:.21), 'through investment in building the network of external relations, both individual and collective actors can augment their social capital and thereby gain benefits in the form of greater access to information, power and solidarity; and by investing in the development of their internal relations, collective actors can strengthen their collective identity and augment their capacity for collective action'. Social capital, therefore, increases the efficiency of action and aids cooperative behaviour within organisations (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998:243).

Furthermore, in a knowledge-based society in which knowledge plays an important role amongst the factors of production, social capital can be viewed as one of the key organisational capabilities and assets which can help organisations in knowledge creation and sharing, and in giving them a sustainable organisational advantage (Rahimnia & Najminia, 2014). Therefore, the sharing of knowledge through the collective network of talented individual employees presents an opportunity to develop the knowledge base of a company (Baron & Armstrong, 2007). Social relationships and the social capital therein, are a valuable influence on the development of both intellectual and human capital. At the personal level, individuals with better social capital - people with stronger contact networks - will obtain higher rates of return on their human capital' (Garavan et al, 2001:52). At the organisation level, Social capital is important as it facilitates the development of intellectual capital by affecting the conditions essential for exchange and combination to occur (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998:250)

Nahapit and Goshal (1998) suggest that within the concept of social capital, three major elements influence the development of human capital namely; (a) Structural dimension: this refers to an overall pattern of connections between individuals, i.e., to whom and how do they have access? This dimension is characterised by such features as network relationships or ties between people, network and organisation configuration. (b) Cognitive dimension: This refers to the sources which provide representations (manifestations), explanations, interpretations, and systems of shared meanings among groups. Language and common codes, and shared narratives are among the most important features of this dimension. (c) Relational Dimension: This element describes a kind of personal relationships maintained between individuals as a result of a long

interaction. Relational capital is conveyed in such features as norms, trust, expectations/obligations, and identity.

In a competitive market environment, social capital which emphasises linkages between individuals can create the conditions for connections, which are non-imitable, rare, tacit and durable for an organisation (Gratton & Ghoshal, 2003). It should be however noted, that although social capital is a complimentary capital, it has its limitations. As Coleman (1990: 302) noted, 'a given form of social capital that is useful for facilitating certain actions may be harmful or useless to others'. For instance, the norms and mutual identification that may exert a powerful decisive influence on group performance can, at the same time, restrict its openness to information and to alternative ways of doing things, generating forms of collective blindness that sometimes have disastrous consequences (Janis, 1982; Perrow, 1984; Turner, 1976).

2.9.1.5 Organisational capital

The third element of intellectual capital related to human capital is organisational capital. This can be described as all that exists in the organisation and supports employees (human capital) in their works, and this is also referred to as structural capital (Lopez, 2008). Lev (2001) considers organisation capital as the unique structural and organisational designs and business processes that help generate competitive advantage. The interaction of organisational capital with human and social capital can in a significant way contribute to increasing a firm's productivity as well as providing the organisation with a source of competitive advantage in an unpredictable business climate. (Raynard et al, 2015; Stanger et al, 2013)

The concept of organisational capital plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between the firm's bundle of resources and the systematic process within the organisation which facilitates the creation of value for the customers and the firm's competitive advantage (Dess & Picken, 1999). Organisation capital is regarded as the most complex category of intellectual capital and includes culture, innovation and process (Choong, 2008). Kulvisaechana and Stiles (2003) explained that in the McKinsey's War for talent survey (1999), 58% of employees said that what they value the most in organisations is strong values and culture. A supportive culture with solid corporate purpose as well as compelling values has been seen as the underlining reason for notable corporate success (Peters & Waterman, 1982; Collins & Porras, 1994). Culture has a large impact on both recruitment and retention of talented employees as well as having an impact on employee commitment (Kulvisaechana & Stiles, 2003).

Organisational capital is seen as the supportive infrastructure for human and social capital since its absence both of the other capitals are not embedded in the organisation. It includes all of the non-human storehouses of knowledge such as databases, process manuals, strategies, routines, organisational culture, publications and copyright which creates value for organisations, thus adding to the organisations' tangible value (Ordonez de Pablos, 2004; Kong & Prior, 2008). Individuals generate, retain and share knowledge through their networks and social interactions, thereby creating knowledge for the organisation. The knowledge created is then institutionalised and becomes embedded in the organisational system (Baron & Armstrong 2007). When knowledge becomes embedded in an organisational system, it is independent of the individuals who developed it (Davenport & Prusak, 1998).

Bontis et al. (2000) argue that human capital is a combined set of knowledge, ability, and experiences of employees put temporarily at the disposition of an organisation during working hours, but organisational capital is the existing knowledge, and ability in the organisation permanently under control of the organisation which will remain there even after the employees have left the organisation. In this regard, the capital belongs to the whole organisation and can be reproduced and shared with others (Bontis et al, 2000). The pool of knowledge that remains in an organisation after individuals have left represents the fundamental core of organisational capital (Kong & Prior, 2008) because organisational capital is the attribute integrating all the knowledge, skills, experiences, competencies to the organisation and help it to own all of those aspects. In other words, talented Individuals come and go, but organisations preserve knowledge over time which subsequently becomes a source of sustainability in a competitive market environment (Subramaniam & Youndt, 2005:351).

2.9.2 The concept of institutional theory

A common reason given for the adoption of talent management lies in the assumption that talents within the organisation can provide a firm with a sustainable source of competitive advantage, especially so for those organisations operating in complex and dynamic competitive markets where the capability to rapidly acquire and adapt new market and technological capabilities is the key to enduring advantage over competitors (Afiouni, 2009; Souleh, 2014). This suggests that to be successful, organisations will strive to attract, identify, develop and retain talented employees that can give it a competitive edge.

In contrast, institutional theory provides a very different perspective on the adoption of management practices. For example, an alternative view to this is that organisations may

implement business practices because doing so enhances their legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Bjorkman et al. (2007:432) argue that 'organisations are under pressure to adapt to and be consistent with their institutional environment in order to acquire legitimacy and recognition by adopting structures and practices viewed as appropriate in their environment'. Scott (1987:494) defined institutions as 'social structures that have attained a high degree of resilience [. .] [they] are made up of cultural-cognitive, regulative and normative elements that together with associated activities and assets, provide stability and meaning to social life.

The focus of institutional theory is on how external pressures influence organisations and their practices. This theory provides a rich and complex view of organisational behaviour, and institutional theorists assert that these regularised organisational behaviours are the product of ideas, values, and beliefs that originate in the institutional context (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Meyer et al., 1983; Zucker, 1983). To remain competitive, organisations must entertain and accommodate institutional expectations, even though these expectations may have little to do with technical perceptions of performance accomplishment (D'Aunno et al., 1991; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 1987)

2.9.2.1 Origins of institutional theory

According to Paauwe and Boselie (2003: 59), the idea that organisations are deeply entrenched in wider institutional environments implies that organisational practices are often either direct reflections of or responses to, rules and structures built into their larger environment. This line of contemporary institutional analysis traces its origin to research by Meyer and Rowan on the effects of education on institutions (Meyer & Rowan, 1977); Meyer, Scott and colleagues on the dependence of educational organisations on broader cultural and symbolic understanding about the nature of schooling (Meyer & Scott, 1983); the research by Zucker on the taken-for-granted aspects of organisational life (Zucker, 1977; 1983) and lastly, the research by DiMaggio and Powell on the social construction of organisational fields (1983).

Meyer and Rowan (1977) suggest two major views: (1) Rationalising pressures from the environment emerges as organisations seek to secure legitimacy. 'They are pressed to incorporate elements that are externally legitimated by socially constructed beliefs in the external environment, regardless of their effects on technical tasks at hand' (Bromley & Powell, 2012). (2) Meyer and Rowan (1977) posited that the possible contradiction between institutionalised expectations and organisational efficiency sometimes leads organisations to engage in the 'decoupling' of formal structures from actual work practices. That is, organisations adopt structures and practices that are aligned with

institutional prescriptions but which are deliberately distanced from how work is actually performed. Conformity is thus "ceremonial" rather than being substantive (Raynard et al., 2015). Institutional decoupling in this context is a consequence of organisations becoming isomorphic with widely shared understandings of the social reality (Bromley & Powell, 2012).

Although organisations need to search for competitive advantage through the building on and exploiting of unique competencies, Meyer and Rowan (1977) suggest that instead of the rational- actor model, in which the manager dispassionately analyses the external world and makes competitive choices, organisations are comprised of actors who, wittingly or otherwise, acquiesce collectively to the expectations of the institutional setting. This homogenization of organisational practices is known as institutional isomorphism, the process by which organisations facing similar pressures come to resemble one another in the pursuit of social legitimacy (Raynard et al, 2015).

Two other major contributions to the concepts of institutional theory were made by Tolbert and Zucker (1983) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983), after Meyer and Rowan's work brought about considerable theoretical and empirical activity. Tolbert and Zucker (1983) in research on the adoption of civil service reform by cities in the United States from 1880 to 1935, identified three possible stages in the process of institutionalization of change in formal organisation structure namely; (1) Pre-institutionalization stage: characterized by experimentation as organisations seek to align themselves with their task environment in such a way as to gain a competitive advantage. In this context, as the success of a new strategy/structure or products emerges and becomes well known, other companies will tend to copy the innovation in order to become more competitive. (2) Semi-institutionalized stage: The model of behaviour at this juncture is one in which 'actors associate certain actions with given situation by rules of appropriateness' (March & Olsen, 1984:747). For example, as practices become well known and as more organisations knowingly adopt them, mimicry happens not on account that the new practices are ascertained to give a competitive advantage, but that the practices have achieved the status of being the "suitable" or "right" approach to accomplish something. In this sense, the adoption of practices is a product of social beliefs and expectations against that of a calculated, rational intent (Raynard et al, 2015). (3) Full institutionalization stage: Tolbert and Zucker (1983) suggest that full institutionalization of a practice occurs only when such practice becomes taken-for-granted i.e. the practice is accepted and taken up uncritically without any form of evaluation such that other options have turned out to be actually inconceivable and in this respect strategic choice is directed by institutional prescriptions (Raynard et al, 2015).

Tolbert and Zucker (1983) indicate that early adoption of civil-service reforms was connected to internal governmental needs, and firmly predicted by such city characteristics as the size of the immigrant population, socioeconomic composition, political reform movements, and the city size. Later adoption, however, is not predicted by city characteristics but is akin to institutional definitions of the legitimate structural form for municipal administration (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). From this perspective, institutional theory combines a rejection of the optimising assumptions of rational actor models well-known in economics with interest in institutions as independent variables. The constant and repetitive quality of much of organisational life results not from the calculated actions of self-interested individuals but from the fact that practices are accepted without questioning, or testing, i.e. practices are taken-for-granted (Paauwe & Boselie 2003).

2.9.2.2 Process of institutionalisation

DiMaggio and Powell's (1991) contribution to institutional theory suggests that the net result of institutional pressures is to broaden the homogeneity of organisational structures in an institutional environment (Stanger et al, 2013), where rational actors make their organisations increasingly similar to each other as they try to change them. As observed by DiMaggio and Powell (1983:149), the concept that best captures the process of homogenization is isomorphism. Hawley's (1968), describes isomorphism as a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to look or be like other units that face the same set of environmental conditions.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) assert that where free and open competition exists, competitive isomorphism (Hannan & Freeman 1977:150), assumes that a "market rationality that emphasises market competition, niche change and fitness measures" exists. Competitive isomorphism may explain the early adoption of innovation but does not present a complete view of organisations. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) proceeded to argue that marketplace and competitive pressures may no longer be sufficient to explain why firms adopt certain innovations and structures for their organisations. They subsequently identified three mechanisms by which organisations can become increasingly similar and adopt similar practices (institutional isomorphism), namely: coercive, mimetic, and normative pressures.

(a)Coercive pressures

According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983:150) 'coercive isomorphism results from 'both informal and formal pressures exerted on organisations by others upon which they are dependent, and by cultural expectations in the society within which the organisation's

function'. Jennings and Zandbergen (1995), for example, argue that following growing awareness of ecological crises and the introduction of more stringent regulations and enforcement policies, US firms across a variety of industries were pressured to adopt environmental management practices. An example in relation to TM can be the role of government in imposing regulative pressures on companies (i.e. the minimum number of female executive board members an organisation should maintain). Sidani and Al Ariss (2014) contend that talent management seems to rest on the assumption that companies can freely source and outsource talent from one place to another and that little research has attempted to uncover regulatory hurdles in TM processes such as regulations requiring a company to draw a certain percentage of its employees from the local population. This represents a significant hurdle in front of a rational TM process. Coercive pressures can push companies to abide by legal restrictions that are sometimes not conducive to efficient TM processes.

(b) Mimetic mechanisms

Mimetic isomorphism results from environmental uncertainty i.e. in circumstances of ambiguity. For example, when environmental conditions are uncertain, firms may copy or imitate the practices of similar firms especially if these other firms are perceived as being more successful and legitimate (Braunscheidel et al, 2011). Barreto and Baden-Fuller (2006), for example, show how Portuguese bank branching decisions were influenced by mimetic pressures to imitate 'legitimacy-based groups'– such that banks even expanded into locations that were unattractive at the expense of profitability.

In relation to TM, mimetic pressures refer to pressures emanating from competitive pressures that necessitate that organisations involve themselves more proactively in attracting the best talent available i.e. companies will imitate each other, hoping to reach desirable organisational outcomes. Also, due to the increasing popularity of TM, and with many organisations realising the importance of TM practices especially where competing firms have fared well, mimetic pressures will push through the adoption of standard TM processes that have proven to be successful. Mimetic pressures drive companies to look at the best TM practices and attempt to implement them (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014).

(c) Normative mechanisms

The last source of isomorphic organisational change according to DiMaggio and Powell (1983:152) is normative pressure and this results primarily from the culture of professionalisation. Professionalisation, in this view is interpreted as 'the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the methods and conditions of their work, to control "the production of producers" (Larson, 1977:49-52), and to institute a

cognitive base and legitimation for their occupational autonomy' (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). For Hofer et al, (2011:150) normative pressure would 'refer to agents' adoption of behaviours because they are deemed superior by influential individuals or organisations.' Leicht and Fennell (2008) contend that normative pressures have to do with the influence that norms or expected behaviours by relevant stakeholders have on a company's decisions and that organisational behaviour is not a mere response to market pressures and concerns for efficiency.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggested that there are two sources of isomorphism in relation to normative pressure. One is from formal education, such as universities and professional training institutions because these organisations are key actors for developing organisational norms among professional managers and their staff. The other is professional networks, such as professional and trade associations, which could be another vehicle for defining and promulgating normative rules about organisational and professional behaviours. Sidani and Al Ariss (2014) argue that beliefs and values are impacted by what organisational actors perceive to be fit and customary within their professional context. A classic example of this phenomenon can be seen in professional associations where organisational actors behave in a certain manner in response to the specific socialisation within their unique professional setting. With respect to talent management in the UK for example, professional bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) and other organisations such as Chartered Management Institute (CMI) are examples of organisations that promote the diffusion of talent management practices. As these professional bodies continue to engage in research on talent management and how talented employees can make organisations more competitive and productive, members of these professional bodies are more likely to implement TM strategies in their respective organisations.

In conclusion, institutional theorists (see Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991) contend that the institutional environment can actively influence the development of formal structures in an organisation often more profoundly than market pressures. Innovative structures that enhance technical efficiency in early-adopting organisations are legitimised in the environment. Ultimately, these innovations reach a level of legitimization where failure to adopt or embrace them is seen as "negligent and irrational" (or they become legal mandates). At this point, new and existing organisations will adopt the structural form even if the form does not improve efficiency (Stanger et al, 2013). Meyer and Rowan (1977) suggested that institutional myths are merely accepted ceremoniously in order for an organisation to maintain or gain legitimacy in the institutional environment. Firms embrace the "vocabularies of structure" widely accepted

in their environments such as organisational roles, procedures and specific job titles. The adoption and conspicuous display of these institutionally-acceptable "trappings of legitimacy" help retain an aura of organisational action based on "good faith". Legitimacy in the institutional environment helps to ensure organisational survival (Stanger et al, 2013).

2.10 SUMMARY

This chapter discusses the conceptual analysis of the talent management concept. It began with the description of what is meant by the word 'talent', the meaning of talent in English and other European languages as well as presenting a brief etymology of 'talent'. Talent as characteristics of people (object approach) and talent as people (subject approach) are identified and discussed as the two main approaches to the conceptualization of talent in organisations.

The analysis of the term 'talent management' is presented which reflects a lack of consistency and clarity in how organisations, HR practitioners and academics it. In addition, although talent management continues to receive attention from both practitioners and academics, it is also criticised for its exclusive focus on a minority of employees. Furthermore, the functional roots of the talent management concept and its development from human resource management are discussed. The attraction, identification, development and retention of talented employees are discussed as the main activities of talent management programmes. In regard to the approaches to talent management, although three approaches were identified (inclusive, exclusive and hybrid), scholars suggest that the exclusive approach to TM is prevalent in practice. Lastly, part one discusses the talent management philosophies identified in the literature.

Furthermore, this chapter explains and justifies the theoretical framework underpinning this study (human capital theory & institutional theory). The adoption of talent management practices (see McDonnell, 2009; Tarique & Schuler, 2010), hinges on the assumption or belief that the investment in the development talented employees can significantly contribute to the success of the organisation. In this regard, adopting human capital theory entails viewing talent in terms of capital; therefore, attracting, retaining and developing talent can be viewed as investments in the human capital of the organisation (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). This thesis discusses how the concept of human capital (HC) is connected with the overall notion of intellectual capital and that HC is one of the three principal components of intellectual capital; the other two components are social and organisational capital.

On the other hand, although human capital theory appears to be the dominant theoretical framework in the adoption of talent management practices, some scholars (see Bjokeman et al. 2007; Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014), suggest that institutional factors drive the adoption of talent management rather than rational or economic factors, in many organisations. Section 2.9.3, explains the origin of institutional theory and discusses isomorphic pressures (coercive, mimetic, and normative) that contribute to the adoption of talent management practices in organisations. The next chapter presents the evaluation of human development programmes.

CHAPTER 3

HRD PROGRAMME EVALUATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the current fast-paced and increasingly changing business world, companies face challenging market realities. For example, creating innovative product and advancing their development, competing in and shaping crowded global markets, delivering shareholder returns amid industry or financial downturns, adequately understanding and adjusting to the changing face of the clients as well as working with less financial and people resources (McDaniel & D'Egido, 2010). In this context, both individual and collective skills of employees are seen as the most valuable assets for organisations because in many respects this organisational asset can determine the productivity, competitiveness and ability of organisations to adapt in an uncertain business environment. Human capital has become an important issue and organisations are increasingly aware of the need to treat employee development as a high-level strategic issue (CIPD, 2007).

Training and development is a key strategy since it enables people to both learn and unlearn skills (Pineda, 2010). Ahmad and Din (2009) contend that in human resource management (HRM), training and development are meant to enhance the performance of employees through a learning process that involves the acquisition of knowledge, improvement of skills, concepts, rules, or changing of attitudes and behaviours in organisational settings. In this vein, Towler and Dipboye (2009) suggest that in the current economic climate, training and development can represent a source of competitive advantage where individuals gain relevant new knowledge and skills. Mavin et al. (2010) concurred that this could provide a very strong argument for companies to invest in their workforce so that they can gain the benefits and differentiate themselves from their competitors (Mavin et al., 2010).

Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) noted that so often new challenges emerge in the field of training and development – for example, knowledge management, competency development, outsourcing, and eLearning. Despite the complexity of these challenges, there is a common theme; business leaders want to see value for their investment. Despite the changing economic environment, organisations in the UK spent an average of £43 billion annually on workforce training between 2011 and 2015 (UKCES, 2016). In

the USA, over $164 billion is spent annually on workforce learning and development (ASTD, 2013). In order for training to be considered an investment, it must be held accountable like other investments made by the organisation and must demonstrate that the decisions and actions taken are relevant and profitable. In other words, the actual contribution made by training and development to the organisation's results must be ascertained. Evaluation is the key tool for this purpose (Pineda, 2010).

3.2 EVALUATING HRD

Human resource programmes are called upon to help organisations navigate complex global environments, recruit, develop and retain top talent and a host of other critical organisational functions. The investment in HR initiatives and their increasing importance in driving organisational change and strategies make the evaluation of those programmes a crucial, and often complex undertaking (Edwards et al, 2007). As organisations continue to invest in their human resource and organisational capabilities, it is important to understand the impact this investment has on the business in order to make evident a return on investment (McDaniel & D'Egido, 2010). Thus, the evaluation of training and development is directly linked with the organisation's quality systems as the information it provides enables training results to be identified, possible deficiencies to be analysed and improvements to be introduced to optimise the training function as a whole (Holton, 1996; Kirkpatrick, 1998).

Wang and Wilcox (2006) argue that training in itself has no intrinsic value. It is not an inherently bad or good thing. Its worth lies in the degree to which trainees are able to acquire, retain and apply (transfer) enhanced or new knowledge, attitudes and skills in the workplace and that the only way to investigate this is to evaluate training and development programme. Wang and Wilcox further suggested that evaluation should be an integral and on-going element of the design and delivery of employer-led training programmes. Holton (1996) contends that evaluation is among the most critical issues faced by the field of human resource development (HRD) and that increasing global competition has led to intense pressure on HRD to demonstrate that programmes contribute directly to the organisation's 'bottom line'. The CIPD (2007) suggests that although evaluation is a fundamental part of the work of learning and training professionals, it presents many challenges. Survey data (CIPD 2006) indicates that 80% of HRD professionals/practitioners believe that training and development initiatives deliver more value to their organisation than they are able to demonstrate. Tansley et al. (2007) echoed this view by suggesting that monitoring by the HR function is an

underdeveloped activity even though HR specialists recognise that it is important to gain an informed corporate picture of how effectively talent is being developed.

Tanke (1999) argues that there is a short-term need for organisations to evaluate their training and development programmes in order to ensure that they provide employees sufficient knowledge and skills to perform their job or change their behaviours or attitudes in a view to improving productivity and efficiency. In addition to increasing productivity, improving the work environment, and higher job satisfaction, she suggested that the evaluation results can provide guidelines toward the organisational goals to ensure long-term success. Therefore, viewing evaluation as something that needs to be seen to be done to satisfy stakeholder expectations but is rarely followed up by appropriate action and changes is of questionable value. In view of this, Gilley, Eggland, and Gilley (2002: 381) suggested that evaluation should be seen as a process, not an event, that involves all key decision-makers and stakeholders and that it should be determined by a clear understanding of the organisation's strategic goals and objectives, as well as its performance and business needs.

3.3 EVALUATION DEFINITION

The literature on evaluation offers a range of definition and explanations, many of which share similar features and orientations. Evaluation is the ultimate phase of the learning process. It is mostly defined in respect to the activities involved in determining the merit, worth or value of HRD in the workplace (Gibb, 2008). Goldstein (1986:237) defined HRD evaluation as "the systematic collection of descriptive and judgmental information necessary to make effective training decisions related to the selection, adoption, value, and modification of various instructional activities". Evaluation of training in organisations means the analysis of the total value of a training system or action in both financial and social terms, in order to obtain information on the accomplishment of its objectives and the long-term cost-benefit ratio of training, which in turn guides decision-making. It involves collecting information on the results obtained in order to analyse and evaluate them and facilitate the optimisation of training in the future. This optimising function is precisely what links evaluation to quality (Pineda, 2010).

Thus, evaluation focuses on determining the extent to which training has responded to the needs of the organisation and its translation in terms of impact and profitability. Therefore, evaluating training involves detecting and analysing the results obtained from a specific perspective: the perspective of the contribution of training to organisational performance and the return on the investment made (Holton, 1996; Kirkpatrick, 1998). Hamblin (1974:12) defined the process of evaluating training and development as: 'any

attempt to obtain information or feedback on the effects of a training programme and to assess the value of the training in the light of that information'. In the words of Warr (1969:7), "evaluation is the systematic collection and assessment of information for deciding how best to utilise available training resources in order to achieve organisational goals". All of the above definitions of evaluation demonstrate a broad range of activities that are connected with it as well as the numerous benefits of programme evaluation (Mavin et al., 2010).

Another dimension to the definition of evaluation (Dawson, 1995:3) explains that the process of evaluation should be impartial and void of subjective opinion: The evaluation of training is the systematic and unbiased collection of information for managers and all other stakeholders. This information equips them to draw conclusions about the efficacy of particular training measures as a way of achieving organisational objectives, promoting organisational learning and implementing policy. Robson and Mavin (2014) observed that the definition by Dawson (1995) is useful in illustrating the broad range of issues that evaluations are intended to capture as well as the variety of reasons why evaluations might be necessary. It is, therefore, obvious from these definitions that organisations will need to have clarity in their reasons for evaluation and they need to ensure that this is shared with all of the relevant stakeholders. Mavin et al. (2010) suggested that failure to do this may lead to an imbalance in the data quality provided, thereby providing limited use to the trainer(s) and/or the organisation. This view is echoed by Burrow and Berardinelli (2003) who suggested that evaluation begins with an explicit identification of the purpose or results expected from the training programmes and that it would be anticipated that training and development programmes are based on important organisational goals and improvement efforts. However, they noted that connection must be directly guiding training efforts if training results are to be linked to organisational measures.

3.4 PURPOSE AND BENEFITS HRD PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Organisations invest heavily in training and developing employees (Steensma & Groenveld, 2010), but very few organisations actually evaluate the impact of their training and in particular its transfer (or not) into the workplace environment and consequent impact on performance (Sugrue & Rivera, 2005). This view was confirmed in a CIPD (2008) Learning and Development survey, which indicates that only 21% (one in five) of the respondents said that they spend most of their time evaluating or monitoring training. Tansley et al. (2007:61) observed that although there is a growing requirement for HR professionals to demonstrate measurement of their activities that is to show returns on

investment in HR and to show progress against key initiatives, their research on talent management initiatives in the UK revealed that majority of cases do little in terms of evaluation.

According to Mann (1996:14) with massive investment in developing training design, the question is no longer "should we train" but rather is the training effective and worthwhile? Robson and Mavin (2014) observed that this assertion by Mann (1996) is in agreement with a broad range of literature which accepts that training and development is essential and recognises evaluation to be a critical issue so that its 'worth' can be proven. Furthermore, Lewis and Thornhill (1994:25) noted that there seems to be a broad agreement with the argument that evaluation is the least well-conducted aspect of all training activities. This suggests that in order for evaluation to reach its potential, there is a need for organisations to focus on the areas of learning and development process.

The evaluation of HRD at work involves the collection and interpretation of data. The results of this measure can be used for a variety of purposes according to a particular need. For example, senior managers might need evidence that a programme of learning on customer service was having a measurable impact on performance.

Griffin (2012: 4) suggested that there are good reasons why practitioners and organisations should consider evaluating their investments in employee learning and development. These include: 'the need to justify resource allocation (budgetary and time), accountability, as a means of identifying ways of improving programmes, assessing whether training is enhancing employee's knowledge and skills, whether training is the appropriate response to a performance need, legal requirements, identifying the opportunity cost of investing in one training programme compared to another, deciding whether a programme should be continued and the reinforcement of prior learning'. Furthermore, Ahmad and Din (2009) argue that the need to evaluate training and development is of greater importance in the current economic downturn where there are increased competition scarce resources. HRD practitioners are therefore under increasing pressure to substantiate the impact of their work in order to rationalise their continuing presence and their budgets (Anderson, 2009).

Kirkpatrick (1998) suggested three main reasons for evaluating training (1) To justify the existence and budget of the training department by showing how it contributes to the organisation's objectives and goals (2) To decide whether to continue or discontinue training programmes (3) To gain information on how to improve future training programmes. Phillips (1996) contends that evaluation can help to determine whether an HRD initiative is accomplishing its objectives, identify its weaknesses and strengths,

determine its cost-benefit ratio, decide which employee should participate in future HRD initiative and identify which participants benefited the most or the least from the programme. Furthermore, he suggested that evaluation could reinforce relevant points to be made to the participants, collect data to assist in marketing future programmes, determine if the programme was appropriate and establish a database to assist management in making decisions.

Easterby-Smith (1994) identified four distinct purposes of evaluation.

1) Proving: evaluation activities linked to this aim (Megginson et al, 1999) are concerned with how to establish as clearly as possible that something- for example the intended outcomes of a particular training programme- were achieved. This shows that something happened. It may justify the costs of training, provide evidence for its on-going delivery, and confirm it was the right thing to do (or, the converse) (Gold et al, 2010).

2) Improving: this purpose of evaluation reflects the idea that the outcome of evaluation provides useful information about different aspects of the training experience, 'leading towards efforts to' do things better in the future (Megginson et al, 1999). Improving as a purpose of evaluation identifies how the training intervention or programme can be improved upon. Although the tendency is for this to be measured and acted on after the training has been completed, it can be done at various stages of delivery (Gold et al, 2010).

3) Learning: Eastherby-Smith(1994:14) suggested that this aim: 'recognises that evaluation cannot with ease be divorced from the processes upon which it concentrates, and therefore this slight problem might well be turned to advantage by regarding evaluation as an integral part of the learning and development process itself. Participants in HRD activities can review what they are learning, considering how to make changes in the context of the activity but also what might be used at work or in the future (Gold et al, 2010).

4) Controlling: This aim of evaluation is often the focus of a majority of training departments, and evaluation results from this perspective can help control the quality of training providers, costs and the behaviour of the participants (Gold et al, 2010).

This purpose reflects the need to provide 'hard' evidence that agreed standards and requirements are being, or have been met, or if not, appropriate corrective action can be taken to bring the training 'back into line' (Megginson, 1999). In addition to these purposes, because evaluation is concerned with the collection and interpretation of data,

results can be used to persuade and influence others of the value and importance of HRD activities (Mumford & Gold, 2004).

3.5 CHALLENGES TO HRD EVALUATION

Gibb (2008) observed that there seems to be a general malaise around evaluation as if it is something that is done more as a ritual than an integral part of the HRD process. Phillips (1991) describes some of the common "myths" that help sustain this malaise and this includes: the result of training cannot be measured; it is unclear what information to collect; return on investment (ROI) cannot be calculated, so it's useless to evaluate; measurement works only in production and finance; if the chief executive officer (CEO) does not require it, why bother?; the trainers have proven track record, evaluation, therefore, becomes a waste of scarce resources.

Pineda (2010) identified a range of reasons why organisations may not deliberately carry out the evaluation of training intervention:

(a) Difficulty of measurement - The problem of measuring various results and, especially, their translation into economic terms. For example, an area of difficulty may occur where interventions take place over a protracted period. This scenario raises a question of whether each element should be evaluated separately or should it take place right at the end i.e. where participants may focus on the most recent interventions (Mavin et al, 2010).

(b) The isolation of the training results among the overall processes and variables that occur in organisations. It is believed that there are too many variables affecting behaviour change and this represents a challenge for both organisations and academics in that it is difficult to completely assess the degree to which the training alone is accountable for any changes. In some instances, it is possible for a less formal support to have a considerable impact on behaviour change just as much as on the job activity (Pineda, 2010; Mavin et al, 2010).

(c) The resources required to design and implement evaluation raises cost. Buckley and Caple (1990) for example warned against a situation where a company invests or puts more into the into the evaluation process than the cost of the initial reason why the training was required. This signifies the need, therefore, to carefully consider the costs before embarking on the evaluation of an intervention.

 (d) The lack of support from management bodies who do not consider it necessary to allocate resources to assess training results, and who prioritise training quantity over quality.

3.6 A REVIEW OF EVALUATION MODELS

The field of programme evaluation offers a well-established set of methods that are directly applicable to the process needed for effectively managing and evaluating an organisation's talent management processes and programmes. Programme evaluation is a speciality area that gained prominence in government and educational institutions as a method of ensuring programme accountability and continuous improvement. Kirkpatrick, (1959), first introduced evaluation to human resources in the training arena. His framework and other extensions of it (Phillips, 1997) have served to create a useful model for constructing an evaluation of any HR programme (McDaniel & D'Egido, 2010).

3.6.1 The Kirkpatrick Model

The Kirkpatrick model has dominated training evaluation discussion since it was first published more than forty years ago. It suggests that training should be evaluated at four "levels". One of the key strengths of this model is its simplicity, which was designed to be understood and used easily by HR practitioners (Swanson & Holton 2001).

Reaction (Level 1): did the trainees like the programme and feel it was valuable? The reasons for measuring reactions are varied. It can help to measure what is learned by participants. It measures an emotional response, which, although not objective, it does give a relatively quick data from which to assess the effectiveness of the intervention (Gold et al, 2010). Another advantage is that it is usually carried out straight after the intervention and therefore the trainers/facilitators receive the feedback quickly and can implement it within a short time if they choose to do so (Mavin et al, 2010). Both Kirkpatrick (1998) and Alliger et al. (1989) caution those interpreting data that positive reactions do not always equal a good training experience, and adverse reactions do not always equal a poor one. A baseline conclusion could be that positive reactions do not guarantee learning, but do make participants amenable to further training and may encourage learning. Conversely, a negative reaction may disengage a participant from learning and future training activities.

Learning (Level 2): did the participants learn what the HRD objectives said they should learn? Evaluating at level two provides learners with the opportunity to evaluate their learning and to identify how they believe their behaviours might change (Mavin et al, 2010). Tests of learning, for example, are undertaken to achieve educational and professional qualifications via assessments. The evaluation of learning from training interventions can follow the same process; however, this is often not designed into such interventions (Gold et al., 2010). Kirkpatrick believes that there is a distinction between gaining 'evidence' and 'proof' and that proof can only be obtained by comparing pre- and

post- intervention performance to identify whether there has been a shift. Bramley and Kitson (1994) suggested that one way to try to evaluate learning would be to use a tool to assess ability before and after the event although the design of reliable tools can be complex.

Job Behaviour (Level 3): does the participant use what was learnt in training back on the job? Level 3 of Kirkpatrick's model is titled 'behaviour' and is defined as 'the degree to which change in behaviour has taken place because the participant attended the training programme' (Kirkpatrick, 1998:20). Although evaluation of learning can evidence the extent to which something is learned, it will not predict the extent to which such learning will be used effectively in the workplace. The third element of Kirkpatrick's model seeks to address this (Gold et al, 2010). Bramley (1999:370) stated that a worker's performance is a combination of their ability and motivation and the opportunity to display such learning. He suggested the use of practical 'performance tests', rather than written assessments when evaluating at the learning level of Kirkpatrick's model in order to maximise the application of learning.

Results (Level 4): Has the training and development effort enhanced the organisation's effectiveness? Is the organisation more efficient, more profitable, or better able to serve its clients or customers as a result of the training programme? This is often described as an attempt to establish the impact of training and development on the bottom line. This level of the model is the most business-focused. It evaluates the extent to which a training intervention has had a positive impact on the overall organisational success (Gold et al, 2010).

The Kirkpatrick model for training evaluation (Kirkpatrick, 1976), also known as the four-level evaluation model, is acknowledged by many practitioners as the standard in the field of evaluation (Holton, 1996) but despite its popularity in many organisations and among practitioners, the four-level taxonomy has come under increasingly intense criticism (Swanson & Holton, 2001). Some of the criticisms include the following:

- Failure to update this model of evaluation i.e. the model has remained the same for the last forty years with little effort to update or revise it despite its shortcomings which have made it look insufficient in respect to making correct and informed decisions about training programme effectiveness (Swanson & Holton, 2001).

- The model focuses only on what happens after the training but not before it or the entire training process (Bushnell,1990)

- Kirkpatrick model lacks the examinations of the instructional design functions of needs analysis, instructional planning and development as well as implementation procedures (Brinkerhoff, 1987)

- The model failed to specify the causal relationships between the four levels (Holton, 1996)

3.6.2 An overview of alternative models

Holton (1996) noted that a number of modifications to the model had been suggested, including adding a fifth level to reflect training's ultimate value in terms of organisational success criteria i.e. 'what are the overall tangible and intangible outcomes of having provided HRD? Are employees more committed, are they more flexible? Is the organisation better placed to realise its strategy to compete successfully'? This relates to evaluating the economic benefits of HRD programme (Hamblin, 1974). Another important modification of Kirkpatrick's model (Phillips, 1995) included a fifth level which focuses more specifically on return on investment (ROI) i.e. measuring the monetary value of the results and costs for the programme.

Other modifications include Brinkerhoff (1987) six-level model that added two formative evaluation stages as precursors to Kirkpatrick's four levels. This evaluation model begins with needs assessment and identifies the goals of training and the second stage evaluates the programme design.

Holton (1996) developed a three-level evaluation model with three primary outcome measures namely: learning, individual performance, and organisational results. These are defined, respectively, as the achievement of the learning outcomes desired in an HRD intervention; change in individual performance as a result of the learning being applied on the job; and results at the company level as a consequence of the change in individual performance. The first significant difference between this model and Kirkpatrick's four-level taxonomy is the absence of reactions as a primary outcome. The second difference is that individual performance is used instead of behaviour because it is a broader construct and a more appropriate descriptor of HRD objectives. The third significant difference between the two models is the inclusion of primary and secondary influences on outcomes (Holton, 1996). ASTD (2009) noted that while there are various ways to evaluate the effectiveness of learning and development within an organisation, most methods tend to fall somewhere in the range of evaluation techniques making up the Kirkpatrick/Phillips model.

The critique that all generic models must be tailored to fit specific needs, which was seen to be an omission in the Kirkpatrick's model (Harrison, 2005), is arguably overcome by the use of another evaluation model, the CIRO model. This model (see Table 3.1) focuses on four questions: Context – what needs to be undertaken? Input – what is likely to engender the changes? Reaction – how did the learners respond to the training programme? Outcome – what are current, intermediate and ultimate outcomes? (Gold et al, 2010). In this model, measurements are taken before and after the training have been carried out**.** Probably a key strength of this model is that it takes into consideration the resources of the company (within the input measure) and their objectives (within the context measure) thereby responding to some of the criticisms of Kirkpatrick (Mavin et al, 2010). Although this model is a departure from Kirkpatrick's model, it has been criticized for its focus and suitability for managerial training programmes rather than those that are less specialised and perhaps aimed at individuals working at lower levels in the organisation and that that it does not take behaviours into account in comparison to Kirkpatrick's approach (see Tennant et al, 2002).

Table 3.1 The CIRO model of evaluation

Stage	Description
Level 1	The context of training. This involves: ■ Examining the expectations and perceptions of stakeholders; ■ Examining whether the training needs were precisely identified; ■ Putting the specific training event in the wider context of the other relevant training/learning activities; ■ Establishing whether the trainers/facilitators enjoyed the confidence of the participants and whether the latter are comfortable with the focus and level of the training.
Level 2	The inputs of training. This involves: ■ Establishing the appropriateness of the resource base and its cost; ■ Considering the choice and effectiveness of the training/learning methods and techniques; ■ Identifying the numbers who successfully completed the programme compared with those who started and draw appropriate inferences; ■ Establishing whether the trainers were seen to be

		'credible' as far as the trainees were concerned; ▪ Establishing where the psychological and emotional climate of learning was appropriate.
Level 3	The reactions to the training experience. This involves: ▪ Looking at the reactions of trainees to the content and method of training; ▪ Establishing the reaction of other stakeholders, particularly line managers to the early 'results' of the training programme; ▪ Discussing the observations and views of the trainers.	
Level 4	The outcomes of the training. This involves: ▪ Establishing whether expectations of results were met; ▪ Identifying whether all or certain of the learning objectives were met; ▪ Establishing which stakeholders expectations and objectives were met; Finding out what were the 'end of course' feelings about the training.	

Source: Adapted from Megginson et al, (1999).

3.7 EVALUATING TALENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES

In respect to TM evaluation, Davidson & Martineau (2007) suggested that in an ideal situation, talent management programmes and their evaluations should be developed in tandem. This helps to make certain that the evaluation will be completed, and also facilitate contribution into the process and greater acceptance of the results by major stakeholders. Scott et al. (2010:505) suggested that the evaluation of a talent management programme should commence with designing the objectives and success benchmarks. Since talent management requires being completely connected to organisational results, it is essential to define its objectives using metrics that are agreeable to stakeholders and decision makers. The focus needs to be on experimenting with talent management solutions to organisational problems and developing metrics that can be used to measure success.

Critics of TM practices (see chapter 2) suggest that implementing these programmes can result in unfavourable impact on the organisation and its employees especially when it is concerned with the identification and management of a fraction of the workforce that are viewed as exceptional in relation to their skills and abilities that can notably or

disproportionately contribute to organisation's performance. Swailes (2013) considered some ethical issues that organisations may have to contend with from the operationalization of an elite TM programme and provided guidance on how to evaluate this initiative from an ethical standpoint. Table 3.2 presents ethical theories and their implications for exclusive TM strategies.

Table 3.2 Ethical theories and implications for exclusive TM

Ethical theory	Implications for exclusive Talent Management
Distributive justice: A general principle of distributive justice (Rawls 1972) requires that people act in ways that treat others fairly and equitably. Actions that discriminate against individuals or a group of employees arbitrarily or without a justifiable basis would violate this basic principle (Bennett-Woods, 2005).	With the prevalence of differentiated/exclusive TM strategy in most organisations (Gelens et al., 2013), the concept of distributive theory relates to fairness in the allocation of resources and incentives on the basis of each person's current and future contribution to the organisation. Based on the principle of contribution (Munson 2004), Swailes (2013) argues that having an elite group of employees with respect to managing talent is justified so long as participants are there on their own merits and in line with Adam's equity theory (1960), it would be seen as unfair if employees contributions differ significantly and resources were distributed equally.
Virtue Ethics: The focus of virtue ethics (Hartman 2008; Solomon 1992) is on the role of character as the source of moral action which promotes good and the intention to do good (Bennett-Woods, 2005).	In business the context, this can mean making decisions that are shaped over time by a combination of natural inclinations and past experiences for the good of the organisation and its stakeholders (Jones et al, 2007). According to Swailes (2013:10) the practice of elite talent management can be deemed to be ethical if it accurately identifies employee potential and empowers participants to reach their potential in the fullest sense i.e. not just for the organisation's benefit and if other employee groups are not denied opportunities to develop and advance their careers."
Duty ethics: Kant's (1990) duty ethics is associated with moral worth of doing the right thing i.e. doing it only because it is right. Kant expressed the view that people should be treated not simply as a means to one's own ends but also as ends in themselves (Jones et al, 2007)	Swailes (2013) contend that if the intention of adopting a talent management system is to raise job security and prosperity for all employees, then the organisation would be considered as doing the right based on Kant's (1990) duty ethics. He suggested that the selection of an elite few could cause problems in judging it a right thing to do i.e. "respect for persons" principle which implies that any business process that puts profits on a par with people is immoral (Bowie, 2002), but that this judgement could be moderated by the goodwill or intention behind the act.

Utilitarianism: based on the work of Mill (1863/ 1998) Bentham (1789/1996), and Hume (1740/2000), admonishes moral agents to promote overall human welfare by acting in ways that result in the greatest total beneficial consequences minus harmful consequences (Jones et al, 2007).	An exclusive TM can only be judged to pass the utilitarian test if it can be demonstrated that its outcome truly does maximise the beneficial outcomes for all those affected by it i.e. if operating a talent scheme produces more overall good than alternative courses of action, then its moral worth is enhanced (Swailes, 2013). For example, if a talent initiative develops high potential employees who have created new products and businesses that underpinned job security for a majority of employees, then this could be judged to have passed the utilitarian test. But if on the other hand it only produces benefits for an elite few without any clear benefits for the rest of the workforce, the scheme could be judged to have failed the utilitarian test.
Stakeholder theory: A major focus of this theory is on the nature of relationships between the organisation (represented typically by its top managers) and interested parties (including employees) (Bennett-Woods, 2005) and relies on the principle that managers have duties/responsibilities towards all parties with interest in the organisation not just to the shareholders and owners (Swailes, 2013).	Swailes (2013:10) suggest that exclusive TM fits with stakeholder theory so long as the company is doing the best it can to achieve outputs from the labour pool for the general benefit of all employees as stakeholders even though in doing so the greater number of employees are overlooked for special treatment. He suggested that high-potential and high-performing employees in an organisation could be seen as a distinct stakeholder group as they have a special interest in seeing the organisation enhance its market position. Based on Gouldner's (1960) principle of reciprocity, Swailes (2013) argued that these employee group could benefit from rewards (psychological and financial) because of their differential output which benefits the organisation and its employees on long-term.

Source: Author's compilation.

From the above ethical considerations, Swailes (2013:10) proposes a four-stage evaluation framework (Fig. 3.2) comprising imagining talent, identifying talent, developing talent and assessing the effect/impact of the programme. The framework provides guidance for HR practitioners and organisations on how to evaluate talent programmes from an ethical standpoint. He suggested that by drawing on ethical pluralism, it is more probable for practitioners to recognise and consider an expansive set of moral issues before deciding on how best to design and implement talent initiatives in their organisations. Swailes (2013) however cautioned that none of the ethical theories analysed above gives a clear-cut way of determining the ethicality of a specific type of TM programme and that these belief systems can only be taken as guidance when making ethical judgments about talent management programmes.

Figure 3.1 Four-stage evaluation framework

Stage	Imagining talent $\longrightarrow$	Identifying talent $\longrightarrow$	Developing talent $\longrightarrow$	Evaluating programme impact
Example ethics-related questions for organisations	Why is an elitist talent programme needed and how is it articulated to all?	What have we done to identify and eliminate selection bias?	How will employees not in the programme feel about being excluded?	How does the talent programme benefit those who are excluded from it?
	To what extent do our view of talent embody virtue and eliminate gender bias?	Does everyone get a fair opportunity to be considered?	How much resource is being put into the programme in proportion to resources available to excluded employees?	Can the resources put into the programme be justified in economic terms?
	How are we distinguishing between popularity and talent?			

Source: Adapted from Swailes (2013).

The imagining talent stage according to Swailes (2013:10) requires the conceptualization of bundles of knowledge, aptitudes and abilities that represent and capture the competencies needed for the organisation's success and competitiveness. It is also important to capture real organisational needs at this stage in order to ensure that the organisation is not misguided by dominant voices in the adoption of a possibly self-centered or gender-biased talent scheme. The talent identification stage faces the challenge of the type of identification practices that should be applied and who should be involved in this process; ensuring that people from all areas of the organisation and of

varied backgrounds are included in the TM system (McDonnell , 2011). Swailes (2013:11) advocates for the recognition and assessment of factors that could lead to biased decisions and provision of interventions that can substantially reduce bias in the talent identification process. Stewart (2008) suggested that the development stage remains a vital component of any talent strategy as it is seen to have an indirect but significant value through its positive contribution to other components of a talent management strategy such as attracting and retaining talent in addition to potential benefits directly through employee skills development and improvement. Swailes (2013) argues that 'organisations should consider how the programme is styled and the signals that this particular approach will send to those who will not be included in the scheme'. He suggested that strategies should be put in place to cope with adverse reactions from those excluded from the initiative. The fourth stage of the framework (programme evaluation) calls for consideration in respect to the talent management programmes have on the organisation and its employees. Swailes (2013:11) suggested that this "stage should lead to ideas for modifying, or at least questioning, the design and operation at the previous three stages."

Scott et al. (2010) contend that the specific criteria used to evaluate talent management programmes and processes differ by organisation, but several key evaluation views help to ensure optimal functioning and justify stakeholder investment. They suggested that any evaluation of talent management programmes and processes should, at least take four key perspectives into considerations:

1. Strategic – the alignment of the talent management system with the organisation's strategic vision. The initial step in the evaluation from this angle is to clarify the business challenges and major strategic priorities that the talent management system is trying to address in identifying the overreaching goals, it is vital to work with the organisation's leadership to understand major organisational matters and priorities. The business challenge will be to make certain that the necessary talent is available in the organisation to drive these plans in both the short and long terms.

2. Operational- effectiveness and integration of talent management practice areas and systems. Talent management consists of a number of formerly separate practice areas that cover attracting, developing, engaging, leveraging, and retaining top talent. For talent management programmes to thrive, each practice domain must function effectively. At the same time, there must be successful and proper integration and support among practice domains. Therefore, a thorough

evaluation should cover both the operational dimensions of the talent management programme as a whole (the degree of integration of the individual practice areas) as well as each component feature that is individual practice area.

3. Customer – stakeholder expectations regarding talent management design, strategies, and success criteria. Since talent management influences the business in so many ways, some clients and stakeholders will want to contribute to the evaluation and final direction of talent management. It will be essential to make certain that these stakeholder groups are carefully identified and subsequently included in the evaluation planning process and consulted for evaluation information (e.g. executive team, line management, programme managers, employees and job candidates).

4. Financial- contribution of talent management practice areas to strategic outcomes, such as market share, time to market, market expansion, and bottom-line profitability. When assessing talent management practices, it is essential to determine the links to the organisation's financial baseline and business competitive edge. This is more than just determining that a connection exists; the evaluation helps to define how the business strategy will be achieved and what competitive edge will be gained through talent management programmes.

In order to make sure that the evaluation is comprehensive and meaningful to the organisation, Scott et al. (2010) rely on the balanced scorecard framework (see Becker, Huselid, & Ulrich, 2001). This framework originated as a method and a tool for the execution business strategy (Kaplan and Norton, 1996). Tansley et al. (2007) noted that this approach has since been drawn upon for functional strategies in HR such as those in talent management practices.

Swanson and Holton (2001) suggested that the focus of most evaluations in business and industry is on measuring a programme's effect on (1) the participants, (2) the participant's work, and (3) the organisation. However, despite more recent models, many HRD practitioners and organisations still employ the use of Kirkpatrick/ Phillips model of evaluation. Hutchins and Burke (2007) contend that practitioners tend to overlook academic research largely because: "findings are often difficult to understand". They also report that academic studies do not appear to have greatly penetrated practitioner guides and textbooks. Far too often academic work is isolated from the reality of practitioners (Giangreco et al., 2010). This explains why the Kirkpatrick's/Phillips model of training evaluation with its simplicity of evaluating participant's reaction, learning, job behaviour and organisational results remains in use 50 years after its introduction.

3.8 EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Evaluation instruments should be easy to understand and be in a format which is quick to complete in order to maximise full returns, while at the same time being comprehensive enough to include all relevant information (Green & Skinner, 2005). Pineda (2010) identified a broad range of data collection methods including the use of questionnaires, individual and group interviews, controls and final tests, activities and learning products, systematic observations, demonstrations, evaluation reports, qualitative and quantitative impact indicators and profitability calculations.

Although there is a broad range of possible instruments and tools with which to evaluate training, James and Roffe (2000) suggested that some organisations can be cynical about using different forms of evaluation (for example, where they are accustomed to utilising questionnaires). There is, therefore, need to agree on expectations and where applicable, for the trainer/organisation to accommodate a case for using a different method. Practical deliberations also need to be taken into account so that the levels of reflection and the resources required are proportionate with the level and types of interventions taking place (Mavin et al, 2010).

Gibb (2008) identified five basic tools in collecting data for HRD evaluation and these include;

Questionnaires: are the most common evaluation tools at the level of reactions. They are easy to design, develop and administer. They are familiar to most people and provide data that can easily be summarised.

Tests: pre-course and post-course test are used to evaluate the learning level, to evaluate changes in knowledge, skill or ability. Tests can be classified in a number of ways, but the main divisions are; media: written, paper and pencil test, simulations/actual performance and computer based test. Design: essays and exams, objective tests, criterion-referenced tests, performance tests.

Interviews: to secure data not available through other means and probe to uncover stories useful for evaluations

Focus groups: this is used if other quantitative methods are not adequate, to get a judgement about quality.

Observations: before, during or after an HRD event. The use of behaviour checklist, coded records, video or delayed report is employed.

3.9 SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed the evaluation of human resource development programmes including talent management activities. Evaluation is seen as an essential and important phase of training and development. However, it is also the most neglected. Many organisations and HRD practitioners understand the importance of the training programme evaluation, but various challenges usually restrict its full implementation (Phillips, 2003). This chapter also presents a range of definitions of evaluation, the purpose and benefits of HRD programme, challenges to HRD evaluation, evaluation instruments and a review of evaluation models.

Although various evaluation models have been considered for decades, the Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model continues to be one of the most widely used in many organisations. This model has over the years being adapted into other models of evaluation since it was first published in the 1960s (Swanson & Holton, 2001). The model suggests that training programmes should be evaluated at four levels namely; Reaction (level 1), Learning (level 2), Job behaviour (level 3) and Result (level 4). From the above, Mavin et al. (2010) argued that evaluation should be seen as a measure of how well training has met the need of an organisation's human resources. Furthermore, it should be structured to generate information on the impact of training on the reaction of participants, the amount of learning that has materialised, the trainee performances on the job and the contribution/impact of training on the organisation.

Furthermore, this chapter presents an analysis of ethical theories and their implications relating to the operationalization of an elite TM programme and how such initiatives can be evaluated from an ethical standpoint. Although an extensive and efficient evaluation plan is seen as a major component or an integral part of any successful training programme, Wholey et al. (2010) cautioned that evaluation activities, in themselves, do not result in improvements in the quantity or quality of the programme, unless the insights generated lead to action which changes some of the key variables within the programme. The next chapter presents the research design and methodology used in the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research design and methodology used this study. Section 4.2 discusses the ontological and epistemological positioning of this study. Section 4.3 describes the research approach and reasons for adopting qualitative approach. In section 4.4, the research design adopted is discussed, and the reasons for adopting the methods utilised are outlined. Section 4.5 presents the data collection and analysis method used. Section 4.6 discusses issues relating to the reliability and validity in qualitative research. In section 4.7, the ethical considerations are considered.

4.2 UNDERPINNING PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The term "Research philosophy" relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge. Research philosophy covers some important suppositions about the way in which researchers see the world (Saunders et al, 2007). Two main philosophical angles, which shed light on the nature of knowledge, are ontology and epistemology.

Richie and Lewis (2003) argue that deciding how to study the social world has always engendered a number of key philosophical arguments. Some of these issues are connected to ontology and are concerned with beliefs about what there is to know about the world. The term 'ontology' is a combination of two Greek words, ontos and logos. The former refers to 'being' while the latter refer to theory or knowledge (Duberly et al, 2012). Blaikie (1993) characterises the root definition of ontology as 'the science or study of being', which necessitates asking questions about the nature of existence. Ontology, therefore, represents a branch of philosophy dealing with the essence of phenomena and the nature of their existence. Hence to ask about the ontological existence of something is often to ask to what extent it is real or illusory. Ontological questions concern whether or not the phenomenon that we are interested in actually exists independent of our knowledge and perceiving it or is what we see and usually take to be real (Duberly et al, 2012).

For Richie and Lewis (2003), in social research, key ontological questions concern: whether or not social reality exists separately from human conceptions and interpretations; whether there is a widespread, shared, social reality or just multiple context-specific realities; and or whether or not social behaviour is ruled by laws that can be seen as unchanging or generalizable. The questions of social ontology are concerned with the nature of social entities, and that the pivotal point of orientation here, is the

question of whether social entities can and should be reckoned as objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or social constructions developed from the actions and perceptions of social actors referred to as objectivism and constructionism respectively (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In other words, social science research has been shaped by two chief ontological positions namely; objectivism and social constructionism.

Objectivism as an ontological position asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This ontological stance, in other words, implies that social phenomena confront us as external facts past our reach or influence. This notion is based on the understanding that there is an external reality which exists separately from people's beliefs about or understanding of it. In other words, there is a difference between the way the world is, and the meaning and perception of that world held by individuals (Ritchie et al, 2014). On the other hand, constructionism as an ontological position asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continuously being achieved by social actors. This suggests that social phenomena are not only produced through social interaction but also they are in a continuous state of revision. This stance challenges the suggestion that categories such as organisation and culture, are pre-given, and as such, confront social actors as external realities, that they have no role in fashioning (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Ritchie et al. (2014) argue that in this ontological perspective, reality is basically mind-dependent; it is only knowable via the human mind, and socially constructed meanings and that no reality stands alone without these. This study adopted the ontological position of social constructionism because talent management as a social phenomenon means different things to different organisations (i.e. the way talent management is conceptualised and operationalized varies from one organisation to the other). This implies that the meanings and interpretation of talent management are organisation specific and they are situated in the experiences of employees and management.

Epistemological considerations relate to the question of what is (or should be) deemed acceptable knowledge in a subject, that is, what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study (Bryan & Bell, 2015; Saunders et al, 2007). The term "epistemology" is derived from two Greek words: 'episteme', which means knowledge or science; and 'Logos', which means knowledge, information, theory or account (Duberly et al, 2012; Grbich, 2007). According to Ritchie et al. (2014:6), epistemology is concerned with the ways of knowing and learning about the world and concentrates on issues, such as, how we can learn about reality and what shapes the basis of our knowledge. It has to do with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible,

and how we ensure it is sufficient and legitimate (Maynard, 1994). It is generally understood as being concerned with knowledge about knowledge. In other words, epistemology is a study of the benchmarks by which we can know what does or does not constitute warranted, or scientific knowledge (Duberly et al, 2012) and ideas about what counts as knowledge, rather than beliefs (Blaikie, 2001).

There are two major epistemological positions on knowledge in social science research, Positivism and Interpretivism. Scholars have emphasised that the development of management and organisational research has been characterised by the domination of positivism, as a fundamental philosophy (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Some authors see two major significant traits of positivist epistemology, and these concerns claims that science should focus on only directly observable phenomena, with any reference to the intangible or subjective being excluded, as being meaningless; and secondly, that theory should be tested in a hypothetico-deductive fashion by their confrontation with the facts neutrally gathered from a readily observable external world (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

Bryman and Bell (2003) noted that in positivism, knowledge is linked with observable facts that exist separately from the mind; that is, theoretical terms that are not directly open to observation, are not regarded legitimately scientific. The main idea in positivism is that social world exists externally and that its features should be measured through objective means rather than being inferred subjectively through intuition, reflection or sensation (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008). Bryman and Bell (2015:7) suggest that positivism as an epistemological position advocates the application of the approaches of the natural sciences to the study of the social reality. Positivism is taken to involve the following principles:

- Only phenomena and hence knowledge confirmed by senses can genuinely be justified as knowledge (the principle of phenomenalism)

- The purpose of theory is to develop hypotheses that can be tested, and that will allow explanations of laws to be evaluated (the principle of deduction)

- Knowledge is arrived at through the gathering of facts that provide the basis for the law (principles of inductivism)

- Science presumably can (and must) be conducted in a fashion that is value free (objective)

- There is a clear difference between scientific statements and normative statements, and a belief that the former are the true sphere of the scientist.

Moreover, positivism holds that methods of the natural sciences are suitable for social enquiry because human behaviour is regulated by law-like regularities; and that, it is possible to carry out autonomous, objective and value-free social research (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). According to Symon and Cassell (2012:18), a principal aspect of positivism is the likelihood to lower human behaviour to the status of automatic responses excited by external stimuli wherein the subjective dimension to that behaviour is lost, intentionally or otherwise. This lowering is accomplished by positivists trying to follow what is presumed to be the methodological approach taken, in the natural sciences. This entails ignoring the subjective dimension of human action. Instead, human behaviour is conceptualised and explained deterministically: as essential responses to empirically observable, measurable, causal variables and antecedent conditions.

In short, positivism sees truth as absolute and values the original and unique aspects of scientific research such as realistic descriptions, truthful description, studies with clear aims, objectives and properly weighed outcomes, a focus on neutrality, objectivity (knowledge of reality gained by a neutral and distant researcher utilising reason, logic and a range of carefully pre-tested research tools) and theory testing that can differentiate between facts and values (Grbich, 2007:6). Although positivism and the resultant use of quantitative methods have typically monopolized organisation/business research, concern about the shortage of attention given to the subjective nature of human thoughts and action has led to the advancement of diverse philosophical positions aimed at addressing the dominance of positivism within the organisation and management field (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

The second epistemological stance, interpretivism, incorporates the opinions of writers/researchers, who have been critical of the application of the scientific model to the study of the social world. They share a view that the subject matter of social sciences- people and their institutions- is basically different from that of the natural sciences (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This position claims that natural science methods are not suitable for social investigation because the social world is not ruled by regularities that hold law-like properties. As such, a social researcher has to explore and understand the social world, through the participants' and their own viewpoints; and explanations can only be offered at the level of meaning, rather than cause. Bryman and Bell (2015) observed that this second key epistemological position denotes an alternative to the positivist orthodoxy that has dominated social science research. It is dependent upon the view that a strategy is needed that respects the difference between people and the objects of natural science and, therefore, needs the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action.

Interpretivism advocates that it is imperative for the researcher to understand distinctions between humans in our role as social actors and this stresses the difference between conducting research among people rather than objects (Saunders et al, 2007). Interpretivism, as observed by Greener (2008) is much more prevalent in the social sciences. Because business and management entail people, as well as things, the interpretivists' rationale promotes the idea that subjective thought and ideas are valid. This idea is predicated on the work of Max Weber (1864-1920) who describes sociology as a social science, "which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order to arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effects" (1947:88). An interpretivist researcher aims to see the world through the eyes of the people under study, allowing them many perspectives of reality rather than the "one reality" of positivism (Greener, 2008).

Interpretivism was adopted for this study because it is believed that gathering and measuring facts will not disclose the essence of talent management as a social phenomenon. Also, many social realities exist due to varying human experience including people's knowledge, views, interpretations and experiences, because people live and work in different places, and consequently, construct reality in very different ways (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Adopting the interpretivist point of view enables the researcher to gain an insight into different constructions and meanings of talent management, from the perspective of the organisation and its employees. Additionally, in understanding the phenomenon of talent management as a human activity, it is important for the researcher to dig into the processes of subjective interpretation, acknowledging the specific motivations and interest of participants. For example, many organisations view talent as a source of sustained competitive advantage, hence, the investment in employees regarded as talent. Therefore, because the interpretivist tries to establish the meanings of individual experiences, the results are subject to interpretation (Blumberg, 2014; Creswell 2007). Adopting this perspective (interpretivism) will enable the researcher to explore the lived experiences of those individuals involved in TM in considerable depth.

4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACHES

In the literature on research methods, there are some discussions on which methods or techniques are more appropriate for social science research. It is often stated that structured and quantitative approaches are more scientific, and thereby, better. Interestingly, researchers contend that methods or techniques are not better because they are quantitative or qualitative, but that which methods or techniques are most

appropriate for research are hinged on the research problem and its purpose (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005; Jankowicz, 1991). Bryman and Bell (2011) contend that quantitative and qualitative research represent distinct research strategies and each carry with it striking distinctions in terms of the role of theory, epistemological issues, and ontological concerns. Moreover, Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) noted that the major distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is not of quality but of the procedure.

Quantitative research can be seen as a research strategy that stresses quantification in the gathering and analysis of data and that involves a deductive approach to the relationship between theory and research in which the importance is placed on the testing of theories (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Qualitative research, on the other hand, encompasses a wide spectrum of approaches, which are connected to different beliefs about what there is to know about the social world and how to investigate it. Although definitions differ, the aims of qualitative research are usually directed at supporting an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world, by learning about people's material and social circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories (Ritchie et al, 2014). For instance in qualitative research, findings are not arrived at by statistical methods or other procedures of quantification (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005). In this view, qualitative research can be seen as a research strategy that normally accents words, rather than quantification in the gathering and analysis of data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Following this line of reasoning, those practising qualitative research have tended to place value on human interpretation of the social world and the importance of both participants' and the investigator's interpretations and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Richie et al, 2014).

Normally, the basic difference between quantitative and qualitative research is considered to be that quantitative researchers use measurements, and qualitative researchers do not (Layder, 1993; Bryman & Bell, 2003), Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) contend that the distinction between qualitative and quantitative methods and approach is not just a question of quantification, but also a reflection of distinct perspectives on knowledge and research perspectives. Scholars argue that qualitative research can be differentiated from quantitative methodology by numerous distinctive attributes that are inherent in the design. Creswell (2014) put together some principal attributes of qualitative research generally agreed upon by researchers, and which is expressed in many introductory texts of qualitative research literature (see Creswell, 2013; Hatch, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). These include the following:

- Natural setting: Qualitative research happens in natural settings, in which human behaviour and events take place. Qualitative researchers are inclined to gather data in the field, where participants experience the issue or problem being studied. They do not bring people into a lab (a contrived situation), nor do they routinely send out instruments for individuals to complete.

- Participants' meanings: in the whole qualitative research process, the researcher maintains a focus on learning the meaning that the individuals hold about the issue or problem, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research, or that writers convey in the literature. The focus of qualitative research is on participant perception and experiences, and the way they make sense of their lives (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990; Locke et al, 1987; Merriam, 1988).

- Emergent design: the research process for qualitative researchers is emergent. This implies that the preliminary plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, and some or all stages of the procedure may vary or shift, after the researcher enters the field, and starts to gather data. For example, the questions may vary, the forms of data gathering may shift, and the individuals studied and the sites visited may be adapted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988).

- Researcher as a major instrument: the researcher is the chief instrument in data gathering, rather than some inanimate mechanism i.e. qualitative researchers gather data themselves through analysing documents, watching behaviour, or interviewing participants (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, Merriam, 1988). They may use a protocol- an instrument for gathering data- but the researchers are the ones who really collect the information.

- Multiple sources of data: qualitative researchers usually gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, documents and audio-visual information, rather than depend on a single data source. Then, the researchers evaluate all of the data, make sense of it, and arrange it into themes or categories that cut across all of the data sources.

- Inductive and deductive data analysis: qualitative researchers develop their pattern, categories and themes from the bottom up by structuring the data into increasingly more abstract units of information. This inductive process demonstrates working back and forth between the themes and the database until researchers have established an exhaustive set of themes. Then, deductively, the researchers revise their data from the themes to determine, if more proof can

support each theme, or whether they need to collect extra information. Thus, while the process starts inductively, deductively thinking also plays an important part as the analysis progresses.

- Reflexivity: in qualitative research, the inquirer reflects about how their part in the study and their personal background, experiences, and culture hold potential for forming their interpretations, such as the themes they advance and the meaning they ascribe to the data. The point of the methods is more than merely furthering biases and values in the study, but how the background of the researchers really may form the direction of the study.

- Holistic account: qualitative researchers endeavour to build a complex picture of the problem or issue under examination. This entails reporting many viewpoints, identifying the multiple factors involved in a situation, and normally sketching the larger picture that results. A visual model of many aspects of a process or a central phenomenon helps in establishing this holistic picture (see, for example, Creswell & Brown, 1992).

Richie et al. (2014:11) observed that the common adoption of qualitative methods across the social sciences is a relatively the latest phenomenon, and particularly so, within applied social and policy research, and that the early development of ideas now associated with qualitative research, can be connected to the writing of Immanuel Kant, who in 1781 presented the Critique of Pure Reason. Kant contended that there are ways of knowing about the world other than direct observation and that people use these always. He suggested that perception organisations only to the senses but also to human interpretations of what the senses tell us. Hence, knowledge of the world is predicated on 'understanding', which arises from reflecting on what occurs, not just from having had specific experiences. Knowing and knowledge, therefore, go past basic empirical enquiry.

A qualitative research approach was adopted in this study for the following reasons; firstly, talent management is a new and emerging field with very little empirical research so far, and as such, this research seeks to uncover and understand the phenomenon of talent management. Tarique and Schuler (2010) for example, proposed that because the field of TM is in its infancy, more qualitative methodologies should be used to facilitate grounded theory building, including participant observation, interviews and content analysis of archival documentation. As noted by Ghauri (2004) and Marshan-Piekkari and Welch (2004), qualitative research is relevant, when research problems focus on uncovering a person's experience or behaviour or where researchers want to uncover

and comprehend a phenomenon about which little is known as is the case of talent management.

Secondly, due to the explorative nature of this research, adopting a qualitative approach, offers flexibility and limited structure in the collection of data. For example, flexibility gives a researcher the opportunity to probe initial participant responses, and this could evoke responses (rich and explanatory in nature) that are unanticipated by the researcher. Bryman and Bell (2011:406) observed that an advantage of the unstructured nature of most qualitative enquiry is that it offers flexibility, which enables the researcher to change the direction of the course of his or her investigation.

Thirdly, qualitative enquiry gives the prospects of gaining access to people's worldviews (Bryman, 2012). It enhances the potential for participants' voices and values to inform the research process and thus provide a grounded approach to the evaluation of a project or policy (May 2002:261). Bryman (2012) noted that aspects of people's social world that are particularly important to them, but that might not have crossed the mind of a researcher unacquainted with it, are more likely to be forthcoming. Using the qualitative approach in this study will enhance an in-depth understanding of talent management from respondents (senior management and employees) viewpoint in the organisations under focus.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN/STRATEGY

'Research design serves to plan, structure and execute a research in order to maximise the validity of the findings' (Mouton 1996:175). Yin (2009) suggests that a research design that is aimed at building an understanding of a phenomenon under investigation is vital to the process of social science inquiry. This section outlines and discusses the research strategy undertaken in this project. It also advances the justification for the research strategy adopted.

4.4.1 Case study

As a research strategy, case study is employed to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organisational, social, political and associated phenomena. Whatever the domain of interest, the distinctive need for case study research stems from the desire to understand complex social phenomena. Case study lets investigators focus on a 'case' and keep a holistic and real-world perspective, such as in studying individual life cycles, organisational and managerial processes, small group behaviour, neighbourhood change, international relations, school performance, and the maturation of industries (Yin, 2014). Hartley (2004:323) noted that 'there is a rising confidence in case study as a

rigorous research strategy, and case study research can be engaging, rewarding, stimulating and intellectually challenging', while Fitzgerald and Dopson (2009:481) contend that 'case study research is a valuable and developing research design with significant potential to contribute organisational studies', and that case study designs have been undervalued.

There are many definitions and understandings of the case study. According to Bromley (1990:302), it is a "systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest". The unit of analysis can vary from an individual to a corporation. Yin (2014) gave a two-fold definition of case study encompassing the scope and features of a case study. The first part begins with the scope of a case study;

1: A case study is an empirical enquiry that investigates a modern phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context, are not clearly evident. According to Blumberg et al (2014:305), experiments for example, usually deliberately divide the phenomenon from the context and often isolate the phenomenon from the natural context that is replaced by a laboratory setting, while case study research stresses the embeddedness of a phenomenon in its real-life context. In other words, researchers would want to do case study research, because they want to understand a real-world and assume that, such an understanding is likely to involve important contextual conditions pertinent to their case.

2: A case study enquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than originally intended. With data needing to meet in a triangulating fashion (i.e. one result depending on many sources of evidence), other results may benefit from previous development of theoretical proposition, to direct data collection and analysis.

From the above, the two-fold definition by Yin (2014) spanning the scope and the features of a case study shows how case study comprises an all-encompassing method including the logic of design, data collection methods and explicit approaches to data analysis.

Qualitative case studies are differentiated by the size of the bounded case such as whether the case involves an individual, several individuals, a group, a whole programme or activity (Creswell 2007:74). Case study research covers both single and multiple case studies. In single case study, for instance, the researcher focuses on concern or an issue and then selects one bounded case to delineate this problem (Stake, 1995). In a multiple

case study, the researcher focuses on an issue, but unlike the single case, selects multiple case studies to depict the issue or concern (Creswell, 2007). Multiple case studies have become more prevalent in business and management research, and are largely undertaken in order to compare the cases that are included. As such, they let researchers compare and contrast the findings deriving from each of the cases. This, in turn, encourages researchers to consider what is unique and what is common across cases, and frequently foster theoretical reflections on the findings (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Yin (2003) indicates that the multiple case study approach exploits the logic of replication in which the researcher replicates processes for each case. The researcher often picks the cases deliberately to illustrate distinct perspectives on the issue being investigated (Creswell, 2007). Yin (2014) noted that replication logic in case study is analogous to that used in multiple experiments, for example, discovering a significant finding from a single experiment call for researchers to replicate this finding by performing subsequent experiments. Moreover, Yin indicates that each case must be carefully chosen i.e. intentionally picked so that it either forecasts similar outcomes (lateral replication) or predicts contrasting outcomes for expectable reasons (theoretical replication).

A multiple case study approach was adopted in this study for the following reasons: Firstly, multiple case studies enable the researcher to explore differences within and between cases, and the main aim is to replicate findings across cases (Buchannan, 2012). For example, in the current study, using multiple case studies will give the researcher opportunity to compare and contrast the findings of talent management practices in organisations under focus i.e. what is unique and what is common across cases, thereby promoting theoretical reflections on key research findings. Secondly, case studies involve multi-method research and one of the main advantages of case studies compared to other approaches is that they permit the combination of different sources of evidence (Blumberg et al, 2014). According to Yin (2009:115-116), the ability to use many sources of evidence as corroboration, to triangulate facts, to develop converging lines of enquiry, to produce more accurate accounts, remains a key advantage in study research approach. For this research, having various sources of information such as interviews with different personnel i.e. providing a variety of participant perspectives within organisations and documents provided more insight into talent management activities as against relying solely on a single source of evidence. This approach also gives the opportunity to apply a process of data triangulation i.e. different sorts of evidence provide different measurements of the same phenomenon and increase construct validity (Blumberg et al, 2014).

Lastly, the distinctive need for a case study approach arises out of a researcher's desire to understand a complex social phenomenon and in this sense, case study allows researchers to focus on a case and retain holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events such as study of organisational and managerial processes, individual life cycle, small group behaviour, neighborhood change, school performance, and international relations (Yin, 2014). TM as a concept is new and emerging in many organisations and one of the main challenges that academics have experienced over the past decade has been the unanswered questions regarding the definition, scope and goals of talent management. In addition, there is a dearth of empirical research in this field (Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Thunnissen et al, 2013) and as such TM requires an extensive and in-depth study in its natural setting in order to understand and retain its real-world perspective.

4.4.2 Generalising from case study research

Yin (2014) observed that a serious weakness in case studies is to regard statistical generalisation as the way of generalising findings. This is because case or cases are not 'sampling units'. Case study research offers an opportunity to shed empirical light on some theoretical concepts or principles. The goal of case study is to broaden and generalise theories (analytic generalisations) and not to extrapolate probabilities (statistical generalisations). Buchanan (2012:364-366) suggested that going past a statistical generalisation; there are at least four other modes in which case study findings are generalizable and these include;

Moderated generalisation; this term refers to speculative associations and was devised by Williams (2000). "If characteristics point to particular structures in one situation, then one can hypothesise that the existence of such structures in a further situation will lead to at least some similar characteristics (….). Though there may be evidence of a shared reality as experienced or shared underlying structures, the complexity of these structures and the possibility of agency to transform them means that generations can only be moderate ones" (Buchanan, 2012:364).

Naturalistic generalisation: 'the reader comes to know that some things told as if he or she has experienced them. Enduring meaning comes from an encounter, and are modified and reinforced by repeated encounter' (Stake, 1994:240). This is like the concept of transferability, for example, a study of managerial politics, the reader normally considers, would those methods work in my company, and can I adopt those behaviours? Buchanan (2012).

Analytical refinement: the findings from case study do not generalise from sample to population, but from experience and observation to theory. For example, if there is a model which says that, to be successful, change must be executed in a certain way and then there is a case of an organisation which departed from that model and was yet successful, this model then needs to be amended. This process also called analytical generalisation depends on the case study being an example of the phenomenon under investigation. It is significant to note that this does not involve proving or disproving theories, but does involve expanding our understanding with an accumulation of fresh observations (Buchanan 2012).

Isomorphic learning: accidents and disasters are distinctive, which may be why the 'lessons learned' from such incidents are often implemented in similar settings. Analysis of the findings of enquiries, however, indicates that the same lessons and recommendations keep recurring. Technical issues (the Shuttle's 'O- ring') are usually outweighed by organisational and management factors (training, management style, communication). Toft and Reynolds (2005: 66, 72-75) thus contend that the lessons from an event can be applied to other settings. This is referred to as isomorphic learning, which includes; event isomorphism (separate incident, identical hazards), cross-organisational isomorphism (different organisations, same sector), common mode isomorphism (different sectors, similar processes) and self- isomorphism (sub-units operating in similar ways).

These forms of generalisation are neither discrete nor mutually exclusive. Isomorphic learning is a form of naturalistic generalisation, applied to unique incidents with respect to organisation and management practice. Analytical refinement and naturalistic generalisation may both apply to most organisational case studies (Buchanan 2012).

4.4.3 Case selection

Conventionally, case study should be representative of the phenomenon being investigated. Eisenhardt (1989) and Pettigrew (1990) both contend that researchers should consider picking extreme situations, critical incidents, social dramas, 'polar' types, outliers and mavericks, where the experience of the phenomena being investigated are strong and visible. Merkens (2004) indicated that it must be assured that the case has as many aspects as possible. This opinion is also echoed by Patton (2002) who indicates that in sampling, the maximal possible variation should be sought and cases should be rich in information. It is essential to focus on those organisations that can offer rich and thorough information on the subject of interest. In this context, Miles and Huberman (1994:36) contend that samples for case study should be 'taken purposefully and not

according to the principle of randomness.' Furthermore, Patton (2002) observed that qualitative research typically focuses in-depth on relatively small samples picked deliberately. And as such the logic and power of determined sampling lie in choosing information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which researchers can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry. Deliberate sampling also known as 'purposive' or 'judgment sampling' depends on the researcher endeavouring to get as broad a representation of individuals as possible, taking account of likely sources of distinction in their opinions and experiences. 'In judgment sampling, you decide the purpose you want informants to serve, and you go out to find some' (Bernard 2000:176).

The case studies in this research were purposefully selected to focus on organisations that can provide rich and comprehensive information on the research subject (talent management). As noted in section 4.4.1, adopting a multiple case study strategy for this study gives the advantage of a robust in-depth understanding of the talent management phenomenon (Yin, 2009) and the exploration of similarities and differences within and between cases (Eisenhardt, 1989). Furthermore, these four case organisations were purposefully selected across different private sector organisations (hospitality, healthcare, manufacturing and logistics) in order to ensure that the maximal possible variation was sought, i.e. to guarantee that the study has many facets as possible as suggested by Merkens (2004) and Patton (2002). These organisations have established talent management strategies which they believe can give their organisations a competitive edge in the industries they operate in and contribute to greater success. In the case study organisations, TM programmes have been operational for a minimum of three years, and the reason for this was to give sufficient time for programme evaluation i.e. to ascertain the impact of TM on identifying, developing and retaining employees that the organisations perceive will make it more competitive.

The case studies are limited to private sector organisations for the following reasons; it is the most likely sector where organisations have established talent management programmes (CIPD, 2013). TM is said to be critical to organisational success, being able to give a competitive edge through identification, development and redeployment of talented employees (Iles et al, 2010). An organisation's talent can be a source of a sustained competitive advantage and can affect critical organisational outcomes such as survival, customer satisfaction, the level of profitability and employee performance (Pfeffer, 1994; Prahalad, 1983). Due to the strategic nature of TM, it is more likely to find a well-defined TM initiative in the private sector organisations. Secondly as noted by Yarnall (2011) talent management over the last decade has increased in popularity and,

despite the recession, strategies for identifying and developing talented employees remain firmly on the agenda for many organisations. In times of economic downturn where resources are limited, it is most likely that only organisations that prioritise TM as means of competitiveness will keep TM initiatives/programmes running and this is also more likely to be the case in private sector organisations.

4.4.4 Research population

This research draws on multiple sources of data/information. The study focused on three different population samples. Purposeful sampling was adopted for the population sample to allow for a broader understanding of TM practices as well as having various perspectives from different employee groups to learn from especially when it comes to the operationalization and management of TM initiatives.

The first population sample focused on senior managers, and this includes directors, human resource and talent and resourcing managers involved in the development and management of talent and talent management practices. This population sample also included line managers directly involved in the development of employees in the talent scheme. The second population sample was on employees participating in the talent management programmes while the third sample focused on employees outside the talent management programmes.

Although the research target population was purposefully chosen (selected) to provide rich and in-depth information on talent management practices from the perspectives of managers, high potential employees and employees outside the talent scheme, the actual research participants in the target population were selected by case study organisations. Whilst in an ideal world a researcher may wish to collect data from participants in a particular organisation, the reality is that the ability to do so and choice of research participants is sometimes, invariably, constrained by what is practicable (Saunders, 2012).

Having research participants selected by case study organisations has limitations which raise the issue of selection bias. For instance, were the research participants selected because they have favourable views or experiences of TM practices in their organisations or were they selected objectively regardless of their experiences? Is the gender composition of the research participants representative of the workforce? At Techco (automobile- manufacturing), for example, where the approach to talent management is exclusive in a male dominated environment, only one female participant was selected for the research. On the other hand at Hotelco (Hospitality- a female

dominated environment) where the approach to talent management is inclusive, all research participants were women. It is possible that different perspectives would be obtained if a more balanced gender composition was obtained, although different samples of men and women may also provide different perspectives on TM in each organisation.

4.5 RESEARCH METHOD

Crotty (1998:3) defines research methods as 'the techniques or procedures used to gather or analyse data related to some research question or hypotheses'. In this section, the techniques used to gather information for this study (i.e. data collection method) are explained as well as methods used in the analyses of data the collected.

4.5.1 Interviews

In social sciences, interviews have long been a fundamental technique of knowing, and this respect, organisation and management studies are no exceptions (Alvesson & Ashcraft, 2012). Qualitative research interviewing tries to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to unearth their lived world before scientific explanation (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). This method has the edge over methods such as questionnaires, in that it is more appropriate for gaining a deeper insight into various perspectives of an occurrence since clarification and depth can be achieved through the use of investigative and open-ended questions (Saunders et al., 2007).

The use of interviews can help researchers to collect valid and dependable data that are pertinent to the research question(s) and objectives and are likely the most widely used method for gathering information for evidence in qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In case study research, interviews are vital sources of evidence because most case studies are about human affairs or action and well-informed interviewees can supply important insights into such affairs or actions. Interviewees can also offer shortcuts to the prior history of such situations, helping the researcher to identify other sources of evidence (Yin, 2014).

Semi-structured or focused interviews are widely used in a case study research. In such cases the researcher interviews people who have pertinent information on the case issues, and follows a specific structure (i.e. a set of open questions) in order to gather information. Semi-structure interviews have two key objectives: on the one hand, the researcher wants to know the informant's viewpoint on the issue, but on the other, they also want to know whether the informant can verify insights and information the

researcher already holds (Blumberg et al, 2014). Although researchers do not ask questions in the same manner and in the same form with each participant, they can ensure through the tighter structure of semi-structured interviews that they gather all relevant information about the research topic, while still giving informants the chance to report on their own thoughts and feelings. By exploiting the flexibility of this method, the interview comes nearer to a conversation and is more natural than a formal interview with a highly structured schedule (Holloway, 1997).

Adopting semi-structure interviews for this study gave the room for flexibility and the opportunity to ask questions that were not in the interview guide as a follow-up to participants' responses. During the interviews, in order to achieve 'rich data', the researcher asked a set of open-ended questions within the topic area, and 'allowed the interviewee the freedom to talk and ascribe meanings' while bearing in mind the wider aims of the project (Noaks & Wincup, 2004:80). Semi-structured interviews afforded the author the opportunity to engage the use of an interview guide i.e. interviews were guided by an interview schedule derived from the research questions/objectives. The interview questions were developed and pre-tested informally with three individuals that share similar characteristics of the research target population (i.e. a manager, a high-potential employee and an employee outside the talent pool) lasting between 40 and 50 minutes.

The aim of the pre-testing was to see whether the questions were understood in the manner intended and to ensure that the interview questions and responses adequately covered the research aim and objectives of the study. Furthermore, pre-testing the interview questions should highlight difficult, unnecessary or sensitive questions that might need to be discarded or amended, clarify the time required for interviews and identify other areas that could be explored. Regarding employees in a talent scheme, for example, the initial questions centred on participants' selection, support received as well as benefits of the TM programme but the pre-testing showed that there was a degree of concern about those excluded from the scheme and this was incorporated into the interview guide that was subsequently used. On the other hand, for participants outside the talent scheme, the question on how they felt about not being included in their organisation's TM programme was thought to be sensitive but was eventually retained when evidence from pre-testing indicated that no harm was caused and that the interviewee was happy to talk about this area. The research question guide (see Appendices A, B, C & D) was approved by the University of Huddersfield Business School Research Ethics Committee before the main case study interviews were conducted.

Table 4.1 gives a summary of research participants, interviewees and case study organisations. The data in this table is represented in a way that protects the anonymity of the research participants and case study organisations.

Table 4.1 Summary of case study organisations and research participants

Company main business and interview process	Interviewees	Gender
Parcelco (Logistics) A leading UK consumer delivery specialist handling more than 190 million parcels each year. Face to face interviews was conducted at the headquarter location of Parcelco in the UK. Interviews were audio recorded lasting between 45 minutes and an hour per participant.	Talent & Resourcing Manager	Female
	Learning & development Manager	Male
	I.T Manager	Male
	Senior Communication Manager	Female
	Leadership programme participant	Female
	Graduate scheme participant	Male
	Employee outside the talent scheme.	Female
Techco (Manufacturing) A diversified global technology company serving the automotive and construction industries. Telephone interviews were carried out with employees in the UK operation (employees were geographically dispersed). Interviews were audio recorded lasting between 40 minutes and an hour per participant.	HR specialist	Male
	Senior Manager	Male
	Engineering Manager	Male
	High potential employee 1	Male
	High potential employee 2	Female
	Employee outside the talent scheme	Male
Careco (Healthcare) Provider of specialist support for adults with complex needs and learning disabilities. Face to face interviews was conducted at three locations (including the headquarter office) in the UK. Interviews were audio recorded lasting between 45 minutes and an hour per participant.	Director of Operations	Female
	Senior HR Manager	Female
	Line Manager	Female
	Trainee Deputy Manager 1	Male
	Trainee Deputy Manager 2	Male
	Team Leader	Male
	Employees outside the talent scheme: Support Worker 1	Male
	Support Worker 2	Male
Hotelco (Hospitality) A 4-star International midscale Hotel. Face to face interviews was conducted at one of the Hotel's locations in the UK. Interviews were audio recorded lasting between 45 minutes and an hour per	Head of Operations	Female
	HR officer	Female
	Housekeeping manager	Female
	Room Division Manager	Female
	Conference Manager	Female
	Conference coordinator	Female

participant.	Team member	Female

Source: Author

4.5.1.1 One-to-one interview (face-to-face interview)

In the course of this study, face-to-face interviews were conducted in three case study organisations. This gave the opportunity to develop a comfortable communicative relationship with the participants, and this rapport helped to engage interviewees in the interview process, which called for confidential, formal, open and honest communication between researcher and research participants. The one-to-one interview also gave the opportunity to observe the respondents, including the manner in which they engage with and respond to the research questions. During the interview sessions, the researcher was able to probe responses of participants in seeking clarification where necessary or when requesting more detailed or elaborate response to a question in a respectful manner which gained the confidence of the participants. Being the sole focus, participants were able to express their individual perspective on, or experience of, the phenomena under investigation (Quinlan, 2011).

4.5.1.2 Telephone interview

Telephone interviews were conducted in one case study organisation because of the convenience it offered the research participants due to the organisation's tight schedule at the time this research was conducted. This method of interviewing afforded the researcher the opportunity to interview some participants at different locations due to their work schedule i.e. such as being on work assignment outside their organisation.

Quinlan (2011) noted that this interview method does provide convenience, for both the interviewee and the interviewer. The researcher does not have to travel to where the interviewee is in order to do the interview, and the interviewee can participate in the interview in any place that has a telephone access or a signal for mobile phone. The use of telephone interview allows for some level of privacy and anonymity because the researcher cannot see the interviewee. There is a definite advantage in performing telephone interview if respondents are spread over a large geographic location or if there is some sensitivity in the research question.

Despite the merits of from the above, there are also some demerits of telephone interviews. Rubin and Rubin (1995) contend that the need to develop a relationship and the importance of visible cues in conversations is undermined. However, Kulvisaechana (2005) suggested that this problem can be handled by communicative validation during the course of the interview, or reinforcing the main point of discussions to check the

meaning of the interviewee's remarks. In this research study, the researcher was able to build relationships by constantly communicating with research participants about the aims of the study and their involvement via email and phone calls before actually conducting the interview. While conducting the interview, the researcher observed that participants were very interactive and willing to give vivid examples about their experience on the subject of talent management which appears to be an advantage in that they were not physically known to the researcher.

4.5.2 Documents and Archives

Documents including archival sources form a rich source of evidence, which is scarcely applied in other research approaches and plays a significant role in case study research. Documents can take many shapes, including letters, internal memos and reports, newspaper articles, agendas, and so on. Documents and interviews supplement each other. On the one hand, are valuable in preparing the outline of any interview and discovering and identifying issues pertinent to the case. On the other hand, interviews can lead researchers to documents that will substantiate information obtained in an interview (Blumberg et al, 2014). Hodder (2003:703) portrays a document as 'mute evidence, (which), unlike the spoken word, endures physically and thus can be separated across space and time from its authors, producers and users.'

Yin, (2014) contends that documents are pertinent sources of information in case study research, they supply a researcher with a stable (i.e. viewed repeatedly), unobtrusive (i.e. not created as a result of the case study), specific (i.e. contains exact names, references and details of events) and broad information (i.e. can cover a long span of time, many events and many settings). Archival records are another significant source of evidence. Examples of archival sources are internal records (e.g. personnel files), charts and maps (e.g. charts relating to the organisation) survey data and personal records (Blumberg et al, 2014).

Information from case study organisations in the form of documents and archival records enhanced the researcher's ability to triangulate and substantiate information on the operationalization of TM generated during interviews with respondents.

4.5.3 Data analysis

In relation to case study, Yin (2014) indicates that data analysis comprises examining, categorising, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence to produce empirically based findings. Case study approach to qualitative analysis represents a particular way of gathering, organising and analysing data; in that sense, it entails an

analysis process. The point is to collect full, systematic, and in-depth information about each case of interest (Patton, 2015).

Creswell's (2014) qualitative data analysis model was adopted with modification for the data analysis stage of this study (Fig. 4.1), and although the figure suggests a linear, hierarchical approach (i.e. building from the bottom to the top), it is more interactive in practice. The various stages are interrelated and not always carried out in the order presented.

Figure 4.1 Data analysis in qualitative research
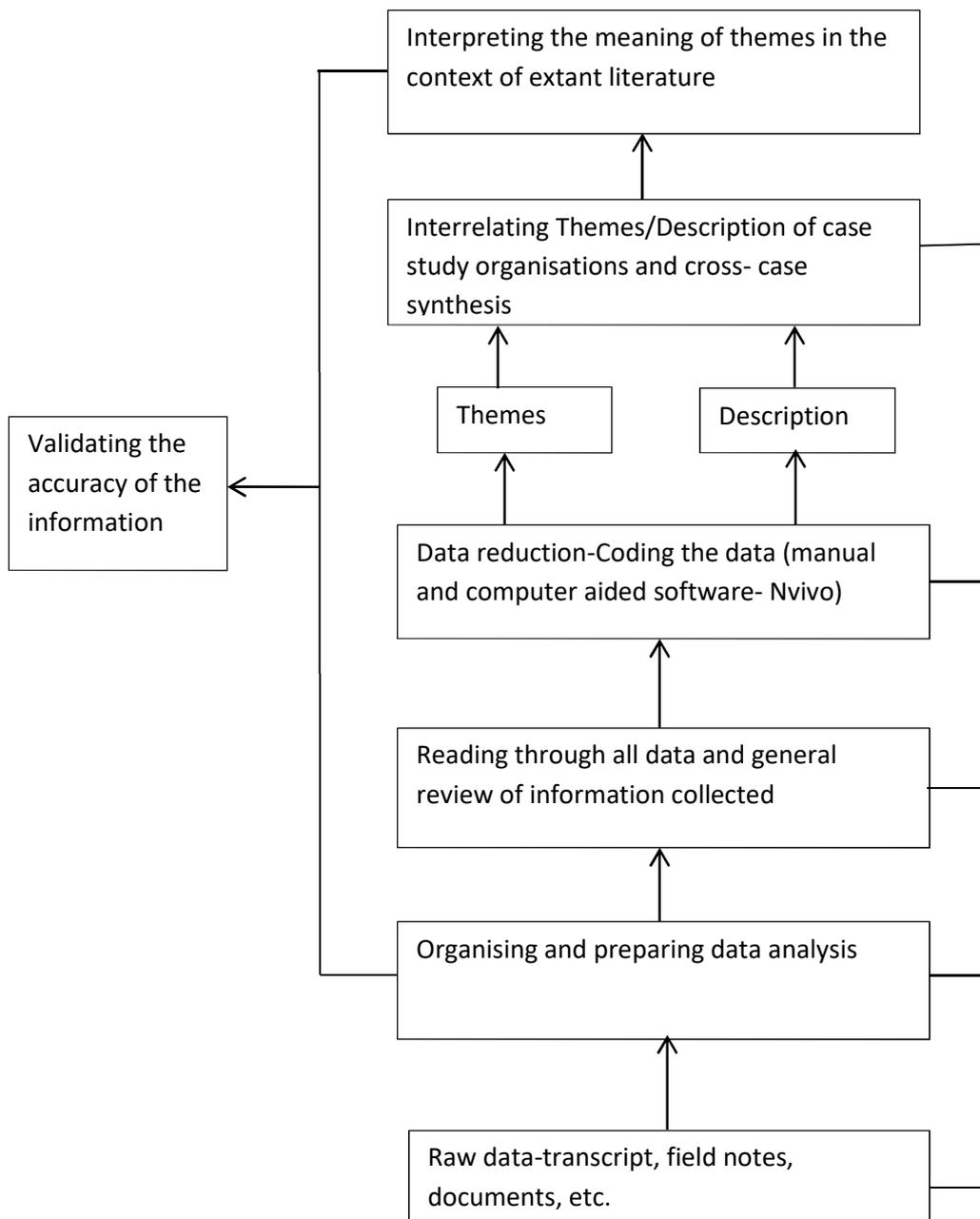
Source: Adapted from Cresswell (2014) with some modifications.

4.5.3.1 Raw data (transcript, field notes, documents)

The first stage in Fig 4.1 involves transcribing interviews and typing up field notes. The sources of data for this study were mainly audio recorded interviews with senior managers, managers, and employees in different case study organisations and this was complimented by company documents and information from organisation web sites. Interviews were transcribed verbatim by the author once data were collected and although this activity was time-consuming, it gave the opportunity to begin a preliminary data analysis. Preliminary data analysis as a process encourages researchers to engage with the text, checking and tracking the data to see what is coming out of it, identify areas which might require a follow-up and actively questioning where the information collected is leading or should lead the researcher (Grbich, 2007). In the course of transcribing, emerging themes were noted to help subsequent analysis of data.

4.5.3.2 Organising and preparing data analysis

Organising and preparing data provided a general sense of information and the opportunity to reflect on the overall meaning of data collected. Data analysis in qualitative research consist of organising and preparing data in orderly manner (Creswell, 2007) and this was facilitated by setting up a database and is included a compilation of data collected for each of the case study organisations (transcript, case study documents, and field notes) and author's own narrative materials. Data were labelled to enhance the identification of data sources and how it was collected.

4.5.3.3 Reading/looking at all the data

Reading and reflecting on the data gave the opportunity to understand what general ideas were emerging from the study. At this stage, it was important to have an insight of what the overall impression of the depth of the information collected was as well as thinking of how well to put information acquired into use. Through reading and reviewing of the transcripts and notes taken during the interviews, the author gained a valuable understanding of some significant but unanticipated responses from respondents in relation to their lived experience on talent management practices. For example, transparency and communication of talent management practices became an emerging theme from the study, although it was not originally anticipated.

4.5.3.4 Coding and reduction of data

Coding is a process of organising the data by bracketing chunks (or text or image segment) and writing a word depicting a category in the margins (Rossman & Rally 2012). It involves taking text data or pictures gathered during the data collection. In this

study, data coding started at the literature review stage during which various themes in relation to talent management were identified. This study generated a large volume of data, and the use of Nvivo software was engaged to allow uploading of documents in Microsoft Word (transcripts, field notes and other materials) for the purpose of coding and further data analysis. Subsequent coding was identified from emerging themes in the interview transcript.

As each interview was read, additional themes were identified and nodes created for each theme. The data were coded and entered into 'nodes' within the NVivo software. The nodes were fleshed out as data were extracted from each interview referring to the same theme. Thus a range of themes was created as a result of going through the data and coding according to themes within each transcript. Once all data had been placed into various nodes, themes were checked through the matrix function within Nvivo to ensure that the various themes were distinct from each other and that there was no redundancy. Qualitative analysis software tools assist data analysis, and although the software does not really analyse qualitative data, the software program facilitates data storage, coding, retrieval, comparing and linking of data (Patton, 2015). Using Nvivo gave the opportunity to build a relationship with data as well as easily retrieving the data; it also helped to build connections within the data which further promoted the development of insights into the study.

4.5.3.5 Description, categorization and comparison of data

The data coding process was employed to create a report of talent management initiatives in case the study organisations as well as themes (categories) for analysis. As observed by Yin (2014), a cross-case synthesis technique is pertinent in the analysis of many case studies where findings are likely to be more robust than having only a single case. In Cross-case synthesis, each individual case study is treated as a different study, and subsequently, findings are compared across cases according to one or more uniform categories (i.e. comparing data from different cases across a consistent framework). Case description entails a detailed rendering of information about people, places, or events in a setting (Creswell, 2013) and Patton (2015) argue that thick, rich description provides a basis for qualitative analysis and reporting. As explained by Buchannan (2012), this description constitutes a form of data reduction, crafting the information overload into a coherent account, which then becomes the platform for analysis and the basis for report and publications. This is a 'base document' from which analyses, selective description, explanations and new theories can be 'mined'.

In view of the above, after codes and categories were formalised, individual case description was undertaken which formed a base document for further analysis and subsequent comparisons across case study organisations. For example in this study, a description of how each organisation went about the identification, development and retention of talented employees aided the understanding/analysis of talent management practices in case study organisations.

4.5.3.6 Interpretation of data

The data interpretation phase of this study involved making interpretations of the findings or results, and this goes beyond description. It means attaching significance to what the data is saying, making sense of the findings, comparing outcomes with theories and the general literature on the topic, drawing conclusions and lessons learnt (Creswell, 2014). The findings in this study confirmed past information on talent management, for example the notion that talent management (TM) means different things to different organisations was quite evident in this study i.e. the conceptualization of TM varies from one organisation to the other but that each variation and its accompanying philosophy can be traced to a singular origin and momentum. These include; TM as a general HRM practice, succession planning or human resource planning, classification of employees into top, middle and low performers, and filling key/pivotal positions. Moreover, with respect to the theoretical lens, although data shows the development of human capital as a key reason for embarking on talent management, a rival explanation in the study data suggest that institutional factors contribute to the establishment of talent management practices.

4.5.3.7 Data Representation

The most popular approach to representing data in qualitative research is the use of narrative passage to convey the findings of the research, and this might be a discussion that comments on a chronology of events, the comprehensive discussion of several themes or a discussion with interconnecting themes. For case study research, Yin (2003) suggests that a word table can be created to display the data from respective cases according to some consistent framework. The implication of this is that the researcher can then look for similarities and differences among the cases (Creswell, 2007). The findings of this study were discussed in details using several themes (with sub-themes), specific illustrations, multiple perspectives from individuals, and quotations. In addition, tabular layouts of the case data according to the identified themes were used to aid the cross-case analysis (the table conveyed descriptive information about each case in the study).

4.6 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Reliability and validity are important theories in both quantitative and qualitative research (Maxwell, 1996). This is because, in diverse ways, they are concerned with robustness and credibility of the original research evidence and by implication whether any wider inference can be maintained (Ritchie et al, 2014). These criteria for establishing and assessing the quality of research have their origin in the natural sciences (Bryan & Bell, 2015) and subsequently extended to quantitative social science (Ritchie et al, 2014).

However, there are discussions among qualitative researchers concerning the pertinence of reliability and validity for qualitative research (Bryan & Bell, 2015) and Ritchie et al (2014) noted that given the different epistemological basis of qualitative research from the natural sciences and quantitative social science, there is much argument about whether these same theories have any value in establishing the quality or the credibility of qualitative research data and investigation.

The roots of reliability and validity in scientific and quantitative research have caused some qualitative researchers to reject these terms and substitute others – such as 'dependability', 'credibility', 'plausibility' and 'transferability' – which they deem more appropriate (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, other qualitative researchers such as Robson (2011) contend that this attempt to rename and disclaim the traditional terms continues to provide support for the view that qualitative studies are unreliable and invalid. Robson additionally noted that the problem is not with the terms reliability and validity themselves but with the very inflexible application in ways that are not always suitable for qualitative research.

Ritchie et al (2014) contend that while reliability and validity are imperfect terms and open to misinterpretation, when taken in their general sense as referring to the stability of findings and how genuine and convincing they are, both theories remain pertinent for qualitative research especially in the context of generalization, where the ability to translate findings to other contexts or wider theory development can be underpinned by the soundness of proof. Moreover, a leading case study researcher (Yin) argues that reliability and validity are pertinent because they are part of a vast body of empirical social research which has used validity and reliability to determine the quality of social research (Yin, 2014).

In Table 4.1, Yin (2014) identified several tactics for dealing with validity (construct, internal and external) and reliability.

Table 4.2 Validity and reliability test in case study research

Test	Case study tactic	Phase of research in which Tactic occurs
Construct validity	Multiple sources of evidence Establish chain of evidence Have key informants review draft case study report	Data collection Data collection Composition
Internal validity	Pattern matching Explanation building Addressing rival explanation Logic model	Data analysis Data analysis Data analysis Data analysis
External validity	Use of theory in single-case studies Use of replication logic in multiple-case studies	Research design Research design
Reliability	Use of case protocol Development of case study database	Data collection Data collection

Source: Adapted from Yin (2014).

Although derived from scientific enquiry, validity raises major issues about the accuracy of research findings, how much they are supported by explanatory proof and its capability for drawing wider inference invariably has prominence in qualitative research (Ritchie et al, 2014). Althiede and Johnson (2011:582) argue that qualitative researchers in diverse areas are likely to come up with alternative approaches to validity i.e. what is valid for clinical study may not be pertinent for performance management study.

For case study research to satisfy the test of construct validity Yin (2009:42) suggested that a researcher must ensure to cover two main steps, (a) define the phenomenon in terms of particular concepts, thereby relating them to the objectives of the study, and (b) identify operational measures that suit the concepts with the academic literature. In this study, the major concepts of talent and talent management were defined and discussed earlier. Operational practices and measures now in use were identified and discussed in comparison with other relevant publications in the area of TM. Moreover, for this study, construct validity was enhanced through the use of many sources of evidence and in a

way which promotes convergent lines of enquiry as well as establishing a chain of evidence during data collection.

Internal validity endeavours to establish a causal relationship whereby definite conditions are believed to lead to other conditions. This test is used for explanatory or causal study and not for descriptive or exploratory study. As suggested by Yin (2014), this can be accomplished through four analytical tactics namely (1) Pattern matching: comparing empirical findings from the case study with forecasted theoretical pattern. (b) Explanation building: analysing case study data by developing an explanation about the case. (c) Addressing rival explanation: examining plausible rival explanation to observed results and (d) Logic Model: stipulating and operationalizing a train of event or happenings over a period which are shown in a cause-effect pattern. Although this research is exploratory in nature, a rival explanation to the implication of why organisations adopt talent management initiatives was considered in the theoretical framework of this study as well as during the analysis of research data.

External validity is concerned with the problem of knowing whether research findings are generalizable beyond the present study, irrespective of the research method utilised (Yin, 2014). For this study, this matter relates directly to analytic generalisation, and the test for external validity was improved through utilising replication logic in the research design phase of the study.

Reliability which involves minimising the errors and biases while undertaking this case study research was improved by a detail documentation of processes followed in the course of the research. As noted by Yin (2014) a common way of treating reliability in case study research is to make as many sequences as operational as possible and to perform research as if someone was looking over a researcher's shoulder. He further suggested two major tactics for achieving reliability namely the use of case protocol and development of a case study database.

Utilizing case protocol boosted reliability for this study and this included having an outline of the case (objectives, case study issues, and pertinent readings about the topic of talent management); data gathering processes (looking at procedures for protecting human subjects, identification of probable sources of data, presentation of credentials/documentations to field contacts and other logistical reminders); data gathering questions (there were certain questions that the researcher kept in mind through the use of interview guide and the potential sources of evidence for addressing each question), and lastly a guide for case study report which included overview format

for the data, use and presentation of other documentation and bibliographical information.

The other strategy for accomplishing reliability concerned the manner of organising and documenting the data collected. This entailed sequentially compiling all data from case study which transcend narrative and numeric information and includes documents and other materials gathered from the field such as field notes, case study documents, tabular materials and new narrative compilation i.e. researcher's own narrative materials (bibliographies, cross-references or other classifications that aided organizing materials in the database) (Yin, 2014).

4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical concerns will surface when planning a research, seeking access to organisations and individuals, gathering, analysing and reporting data (Saunders et al, 2007). Most authors who discuss qualitative research address the importance of ethical considerations (Spradley,1980) which are moral principles and values that affect the way a researcher or group of researchers perform their research activities and it applies to all situations and activities that have potential injury of any kind to anybody (Ghuari & Grohaung, 2005). Creswell (2014:95) suggested that 'attention needs to be directed toward ethical issues prior to conducting the study; beginning a study; during data collection and data analysis; and in reporting, sharing, and storing the data.' Research ethics consequently relate to the question regarding how researchers formulate and clarify their research topic, design their research and gain access, gather data, process and store their data, analyse data and write up their research findings ethically and responsibly (Saunders et al, 2009). Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) identified some primary principles in research ethics that researchers need to take into consideration when embarking on a research project and this displayed in Table 4.2

Table 4.3 Key principles in research ethics

1	Ensuring that no harm comes to the participants
2	Respecting the dignity of research participants
3	Ensuring a fully informed consent of research participants
4	Protecting the privacy of research subjects
5	Ensuring the confidentiality of research data
6	Protecting the anonymity of individuals or organisations

7	Avoiding deception about the aims or nature of the research
8	Declaration of affiliations, conflict of interest and funding sources
9	Transparency and honesty in communicating about the research
10	Avoidance of any false or misleading reporting of research findings.

Source: Adapted from Easterby-Smith et al, (2008).

According to Yin (2014:77), in case study research, specific ethical considerations occur for all research involving human subjects- potential study participants or people about whom a researcher might gather earlier stored data, such as personnel or client records or student grades. Consequently, sometime between the completion of the research design and start of the data gathering, a researcher will need to demonstrate his/her protective plan for the human subject in the case study. Yin, further observed that the study of 'a contemporary phenomenon in its real world context' obligates a researcher to important moral practices much the same as those followed in medical research and in this way a social scientist differs from scientist who study physical, chemical or other nonhuman systems or from historians who study the 'dead past'.

In the course of this research, ethical issues were considered throughout the research process (i.e. before conducting the study, at the beginning of the study, during data collection and data analysis, and in reporting, sharing, and storing the data collected for the study) and the following safeguards were employed;

- Before proceeding with the study, the author followed ethical guidelines from the University of Huddersfield and obtained approval for the study from the Business School Research Ethics Committee (the author sent a sample of interview question guide, research information- including research aim and objectives, consent letter as well as letter of introduction to the ethics committee).

- Informed consent was gained (written and signed) from research participants in the study, by alerting them to the nature of your case study and formally soliciting their participation in the case study.

- Research aim and objectives were articulated verbally and in writing so that they are undoubtedly understood by research participants including a description of how the data will be used.

- Research participants were informed of all data collection devices (participants were informed of the audio recording and consent was given before interviews were recorded)

- The author ensured participants' privacy and confidentiality were protected at all times and that they were not being put in any undesirable position as a result of their participation in the study. Rights of privacy and anonymity were respected in the storage, access and reporting of the research

- Participants were duly informed of their right not answer any question that they felt uncomfortable about and that they could terminate the interview when needed.

In addition, the author conducted the research with special care and sensitivity going beyond the research design and other technical considerations.

4.8 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the research design and methodology used in this study. The philosophical positions (i.e. ontology and epistemology) underpinning this study and the reasons for the stance taken have been described. Constructionist ontology, which embodies that 'no external reality exists independent of our beliefs and understanding' (Ritchie et al., 2014), was adopted, while interpretivism, which entails dealing with a socially constructed reality was adopted as the epistemological stance to complement the ontological position for this study. Following an interpretivist perspective, qualitative research approach was adopted which exemplifies the view that human beings are more than mere elements responding to the world i.e. social reality is seen as a constantly changing emergent property of an individual's experience. This approach enabled an in-depth exploration of participants' understanding and experiences of talent management which remains a fairly new concept with little empirical research. Multiple case studies (which exploits the replication logic) was utilised to explore the differences and similarities in the talent management practices between and within cases with the aim of replicating findings across case study organisations.

Furthermore, this chapter presents the method of data collection and the data analysis technique employed. Semi-structured interview guided by interview schedule was adopted for this study to ensure that relevant context and divergent views were brought into focus so that situated knowledge on the talent management phenomenon from both management and employees' perspectives can be produced. In addition to the interviews, documents and archival records were utilised to aid data triangulation.

Creswell's (2014) qualitative data analysis model with some modification was adopted for the data analysis phase of this study. This chapter further presents reliability and validity in qualitative research, ethical considerations, and a brief description of the several processes undertaken in this study. The next chapter presents the case by case empirical findings from the four case study organisations.

CHAPTER 5
CASE STUDY FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents case by case empirical findings in the conceptualization and operationalization of talent management practices from management and employees (both within and outside the talent scheme) perspectives. It begins with an introduction to case study organisation and concludes with a table summarising the similarities and differences identified in the experiences and operationalization of the TM initiatives. The four case organisations presented include; Careco (Section 5.2), Parcelco (Section 5.3), Hotelco (Section 5.4) and Techco (Section 5.5).

5.2 CARECO

Careco is a private sector organisation in the healthcare industry with over 1,500 employees. It is a leading provider of specialist support for adults with learning disabilities and complex needs. Current services include an independent hospital (providing assessment and treatment services suitable for both out-patients and clients detained under the 1983 Mental Health Act), residential care homes and supported living services.

The organisation offers specialised work projects (vocational and learning activities) where clients can learn and develop valuable life skills while in care. These include; horticulture projects offering work placement on allotment and poly-tunnels all year round; Textiles workshop where service user produce items for commercial purposes such as aprons, curtains, cushions and scarves and; a commercial bakery that produces pizza, bread, scones and other products for different services within the organisation. Careco has an Investor in People accreditation and was awarded for 'Training and Dissemination of Good Practice in care services' at the Laing and Buisson Independent Specialist Care Awards.

A total of eight interviews were conducted with the following; Director of Operations, Senior HR Manager, Line manager, two Support Workers and three employees involved in the talent scheme (two trainee deputy managers and a team leader).

5.2.1 Talent management at Careco

Talent definition

Talented individuals at Carco are seen as people with exceptional qualities that can help progress the organisation forward. The Senior HR Manager commented;

Talent refers to someone that can bring a skill to us that we find valuable. That can be open and massive because it could be their commitment, their loyalty and it could be their administrative skill; it could be their organisational skills, it is quite broad, something that could be interesting or help us progress going forward.

According to the Regional Operation Director, talent in the organisation can be viewed in relation to the distinctive qualities demonstrated by employees that can help the organisation achieve success in the various services it provides its clients. This could be knowledge, professional attitude, experience and practical skills that contribute to the growth of the organisation. The definition of talent from the above can be construed as exceptional characteristics demonstrated by individual employees. It is believed that employees with excellent skills and abilities can positively contribute to the growth of the organisation. This definition suggests that talent entails a broad spectrum of skills and abilities which can be either innate or acquired or a combination of both. In order words, talent can be a result of practice and development over time that employees have acquired which makes them excellent performers in their given discipline or it can be seen as a demonstration of exceptional natural abilities or as comprising of both nature and nurture components.

TM conceptualization and approach

The approach to TM is exclusive, and it is aimed at identifying and developing talented employees into more senior positions. For staff members wishing to progress their careers, Careco operates a talent scheme for staff development which is divided into three tiers – Bronze, Silver, and Gold – each of these awards provides a framework within which, staff members may expand their competencies and develop their careers. The bronze award provides employees with skills required for team leading, the silver award provides employees with training and development into deputy manager's position, while the gold award scheme is designed to develop and provide employees with all related skills required for full managerial posts in the organisation. TM is viewed from the perspective of succession planning or management. The Senior HR Manager explained;

It is promoting talent from within to make sure we have a succession of staff who may start as support workers, but then when team leaders leave or move on to progress as deputy manager, we have somebody who can replace them. It is much easier for us to

recruit internally because people already know Careco, they understand our values and know what we are looking for, know what we are about. We get to know them and hope they can progress with our company.

The Operations Director further explained;

We are very keen on looking to grow from within the organisation where it is possible and where it is right. It obviously has to be right for the needs of the service user and services. We like to provide opportunities that are maybe a little different, a little bit unique that is going to help with gaining skills and competencies, and this targets a broad range of areas in the development of future leaders.

It is believed that growing talent from within helps the company develop managers who already share the values and the culture inherent in the business as well as saving cost and time with respect to recruiting and training employees for leadership positions externally. With the organisation expanding at a fast pace, talent management is therefore seen as a means of developing and promoting talented employees from within the organisation.

TM responsibility and processes

The TM initiative is managed by the senior management team, and this includes; Directors, Managers, and the HR department. Talent identification at Careco starts with the immediate line managers identifying talented employees and nominating them for the various award schemes through regular supervisions, performance appraisal and observation on the shop floor. The HR department conducts what is known as a health check on employees with respect to their suitability for the talent scheme. Although it is possible for employees to put themselves forward for the talent scheme, evidence indicates that it is very unlikely for an employee to be selected for the talent programme if such employee is not recommended in the first instance by his/her line manager. Therefore, talent identification in the organisation is seen as the line manager's judgement.

The organisation utilises various methods in developing talent within the organisation, and these include both internal and external training, learning on the job, secondments and shadowing. For example, there is a deputy manager secondment programme being run at two centres (services) within the organisation initially for six months but which can be extended depending on how the applicant achieves the set aims and objectives. On completion of the programme, the employee returns back to his/her former position but is then added to the talent pool from which they can apply for a deputy manager's position if one becomes available. Employees in the bronze award scheme i.e. those aspiring to be team leaders are developed mainly through shadowing and learning on the job activities. Retaining talented employees is seen as a crucial aspect of managing talent.

New retention packages are being implemented to keep the organisation from losing its staff to their competitors such as the long service wage scheme which rewards employees who have been employed for more than 18 months and also giving employees access to medical insurance (optical and dental). The senior HR Manager noted;

Last year we looked at implementing a long service type wage, so if you have been with the company eighteen months, your wages increase. Moreover, we have employees system programme; we have looked at optical and dental, so we try to look at other benefits. So this is something we did not offer in the past when we were smaller but do now as we are growing and needing to keep up with our competitors.

She further explained;

I think there is quite a lot of loyalty from employees to us after we have invested time in them and developed them. So we have these psychological contracts. We do not seem to loose or have much turnover of deputy manager post level.

The management team believes that investing in and developing employees enable the organisation to retain employees in the leadership cadre, and this is evident in the high degree of commitment shown by the employee group as well as a very low level of turnover experienced in the organisation. Evidence from the management and employees in this study indicates that there appear to be a mutual understanding or relationship between the organisation and its employees especially as it relates to mutual expectation. Because of the level of development received by employees in the talent scheme, they show commitment and loyalty to the organisation.

Why talent management?

With the rapid growth and expansion experienced by Careco, there was a realisation that for the organisation to remain competitive and successful there is a need for people to grow with the organisation and therefore it sees talent management as a means of achieving this goal. The Operations Director explains;

We are growing and expanding quite quickly, and the benefits of having an internal programme mean we get people who understand what we are about. They know what we stand for and want to achieve, and where we have a need for new services or where we have a crisis in services, someone is there to fill in and represent us.

The Senior HR Manager echoed similar view as to why the drive for talent management is of priority, she stated;

Because we have realised that is how we are going to successfully grow organically and maintain the quality. Top people who have come through the ranks, started to learn our values form the shift floor; they are going to make better managers than someone who maybe has no experience of working in a home setting but has got a management qualification. It is very different in practice than it is in theory. I think that when we

realised we have got some superb staff and we need to commit them as well as they commit to us.

The growth and expansion of the organisation into new services pose a great challenge to Careco in regards to acquiring the right set of talented employees to manage the growth of the business. Findings reveal that managers who have been hired externally often fail to meet the organisation's drive and goals thereby hindering the progress and expansion of services. Careco sees TM as the major way for the organisation to remain competitive in the care service industry and due to the fast rate of growth the organisation is experiencing. It is believed developing managers within the organisation will help the organisation cope with high demand for managers in new services.

Evaluation

Careco has an assessment procedure in place which is carried out mostly through monthly supervision. For example, those on the secondment programme have a portfolio of the task to accomplish, and assessments are carried out during and after the secondment programme. A line Manager explained;

Evaluation is very much incorporated into the secondment portfolio, and once a month there is an assessment and feedback session with the trainee deputy manager. One of the managing directors who is also involved in the talent scheme meets with the trainee manager, and an assessment is carried out on the employee's progress. Every couple of months they will call me and ask me for feedbacks. So you know, it is quite a tiny group, and we all know where the persons are or what stage that they are in.

Evidence from this study indicates that Careco appears to utilise Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model. Assessment was carried out on participant reactions, learning and job behaviour. The impact of TM on the organisation or ROI was not measured, but evidence indicates that since the commencement of the talent scheme, there have 15 promotions of talented employees into managerial positions. From the management perspective, this is an indication that the TM strategy was achieving its goal.

Challenges

According to interviewees, the organisation has encountered some challenges in the operationalization of talent initiatives and these include; time constraints, managing the expectations of employees undergoing the talent programme and unwillingness of managers in participating in the talent development process. The Operations Director noted;

Honestly, I think a challenge is that we have to work with time, time constraint probably. Managers are very busy as we all have and we do have an expectation for managers to make this scheme work and provide the support and make sure that the member of staff

is feeling valuable, feeling supported and that they are motivated to complete the programme.

Time constraints on the part of managers charged with the responsibility of developing trainee deputy managers is an important challenge facing the talent initiative in the organisation. Moreover, because of the nature of the business sector Careco operates in, some managers in addition to their busy schedule, see developing employees in the secondment programme as burdensome of which the senior management does recognise as a major hindrance to the development of employees into the management level. The Senior HR manager further explained;

We are heavily reliant on the managers, and the downside is in the past we have chosen the wrong manager or the wrong home for the secondment programme. We think we have got that right now. We are also quite limited where we can place employees as in secondment roles because it is only certain homes where it will work, and it is not very localised which can challenging for employees who have to commute a long distance. I will hope employees expectations are managed as well, again we are a little bit reliant on the managers for that because at the end of the programme it is not a right that they are going to have a deputy post, so we are quite clear hopefully.

From the above, the operationalization of talent management initiatives in the organisation is not without some challenges. As the organisation continues to grow and expand, notably among these challenges is the issue relating to getting the right managers who were willing to support the development of employees into managerial cadre. There was also the problem of location i.e. where the secondment programme is situated, in some cases, employees are unable to get on the programme due to commuting related challenges. The layout of the secondment scheme implies that managing participant expectations automatically becomes the responsibility of the line manager and where such expectations are not well managed especially if there are no vacancies for the more senior position after participants complete the training they might be left feeling dissatisfied with their progress and achievements.

The Future of TM programmes

Interviewees believe the TM initiative has been a very effective strategy that has contributed to the success of the organisation and that it will continue to grow and possibly expand to other regions where it provides services. The Senior HR Manager commented;

I would think that the secondment would need at least 1 to 2 places where we would be able to offer a secondment post geographically. We are operating in South Yorkshire now, so South Yorkshire coming to West Yorkshire for secondment is not going to work. So I think it will continue to grow, maintain the same structure which at the moment really works.

Also, according to the Director of Operations, the organisation aims to add to the deputy manager secondment programme by introducing a fast-track program for graduates. This is meant to attract university graduate into healthcare services especially those who do not have experience of working within the care sector.

5.2.2 Employee experiences of talent management at Careco

Five themes were identified from employee experiences of talent management. Firstly, the talent scheme appeared transparent and openly communicated to staff and interviewees within and outside the talent scheme demonstrated an understanding of the TM programme. Careco provides information on its website for prospective employees of the opportunities available to them in areas of training and development and career progression. Individuals wishing to advance their careers are developed through a career path model which provides a framework within which employees can expand their competencies. Interviewees outside the talent secondment scheme commented;

As an employee in the support worker position, I have seen people who like me started at the bottom and have progressed into a managerial position. I do think the organisation has an interest in developing and helping us progress within the organisation. So you have to go through the bronze and silver awards, and then you will be considered for the secondment programme which is a step into management. (Support worker 2)

In relation to talent management, my experience is that you go through the rank in the sense that you have to go through from being new employee, get through your probation, your bronze award before you get the role of an acting team leader and then get to do your silver and then deputy manager secondment programme. However, there are exceptional cases where you could just jump a step because you have shown the quality that is required. (Team Leader)

A participant in the talent secondment scheme further explained;

I started at the bottom as a support worker, and you start from the right basic foundation, and you do your basics, then the organisation tries to develop you. You have your supervisions, and they find the areas of your development, so you speak on one to one basis, they ask you where you see yourself in the future. If they see qualities and skills in you, they will support you, if you are ready to develop. Through supervision meetings with my line manager, I was given the opportunity to progress into more senior positions. (Trainee Deputy Manager 2)

From the employee's view of their experiences (both within and outside the talent scheme), it was evident that there is a shared understanding by the employees of the talent management initiative. Employees believe they are provided with the opportunities to develop and progress into a more senior role if they are willing to progress within the organisation. Information from the interviewees also indicates that although the organisation provides opportunities for career progression, employees must also show the willingness to develop and progress their careers. The employees in the talent scheme raised two important points about identifying employees' developmental needs

and the possibility of career progression through supervision with the line manager. This corroborates earlier findings which show the line manager as having a key responsibility of identifying talent in the organisation.

Secondly, as regards the practice of line managers identifying talent, employees outside the talent scheme appealed for fairness in the selection process for the various talent scheme initiatives.

Staff members who have worked for a longer period should be given opportunity first and not just bypassing them; that is first in first out. An older member of staff should be given the opportunity before a newer member of staff as opposed to just anybody, letting the newer members get in while the older ones are still waiting for their chance is not fair. This has happened in time past, and it still does happen. Unfortunately, it is just the way the organisation works. (Support Worker 1)

I think employees who have been with the company for a longer time should be given opportunity first before newer members of staff. Because when newer staff members get the opportunity to progress through the talent programme at the expense of the older ones, then it will appear the organisation is overlooking some employee group and some people are not happy about this, and I hope the company will look into it. (Support Worker 2)

Interviewees acknowledge that although not all employees can go onto the programme due to limited spaces, there should be some degree of fairness in the selection process whereby employees who have worked longer in the organisation are given more opportunities when considering people for the scheme. They suggested that when newer employees get into the programme before the older ones get the chance to do so, then it will appear that they are being overlooked. This situation they believe can lead to staff feeling demotivated and dissatisfied.

Thirdly, data indicate that people within the talent scheme have different views and experiences with respect to managing the concerns and reactions of employees outside the talent scheme.

The worries come in where someone that has started a year after them gets promoted, so they think what is happening now, so they do not take time to look back in their action, what is it they are doing wrong, and they do not take time to come to management share their grievances. All they will do is kind of spread rumours of ill-treatment within the staff team. (Trainee Deputy Manager 1)

Generally, with each service, it is different. However, here where I am managing, every employee has supervision within two months or every four weeks. We sit down on a one to one basis, and we actually ask them where they do see themselves, do they like to develop themselves into senior positions or are they happy with their roles, is there further development or any sort of support they need? In that sense, we are really opened minded. (Trainee Deputy Manager 2)

The experiences from participants suggest two different approaches to managing the concerns of employees outside the talent scheme by two separate units within the

organisation. In the first approach, employees are expected to voice their concerns during supervision meetings with their line manager in respect to their development and progression. This method might be counterproductive because employees will not want to be seen as complaining about how they are treated compared to others and they may never make their concerns known to the management but rather discuss their perceived unfairness with colleagues. The second approach identified entails providing support for staff as well as managing the concerns of employees outside the talent scheme. Notably, there is the drive to find out if employees are happy with their current role as well as engaging with staff to determine areas of future development and career progression in the organisation. This second approach will undoubtedly give employees the opportunity to discuss their personal progress and areas of future development with their immediate line manager without necessarily been seen as complaining about their level of progression in the organisation.

Despite the concerns raised in relation to employees who may feel unfairly excluded from the TM initiative, evidence indicates that employees believe the organisation provides learning and development opportunities for all employees in the organisation.

The talent programme is part of the learning programme. However, we have other mandatory training which people have to undertake in their role year in, year out and you get refresher courses as well to sharpen your knowledge and skills. Moreover, as I mentioned earlier, we have regular supervisions, so if you require additional support or training in any area, the managers are always willing to put you on courses to help with your development and ensure that you have the necessary skills to carry out your job role effectively. (Support Worker 1)

This organisation does provide learning and development opportunities for its employees at all levels. My manager has been very instrumental in my development since joining the organisation. During one of my supervision meetings, it was identified that I needed medication training in my job role and straight away I was put on the course, this was quite encouraging. I have also undertaken numerous training that makes feel competent in my job role as a support worker. (Support Worker 2)

Evidence indicates that employees outside the talent scheme do not feel left out when it comes to development opportunities even though they are not part of the talent programme. This arises as Careco provides adequate support for every employee's learning and development which empowers them to be efficient at their assigned job roles.

Fourthly, with regards to the level of support provided by Careco in the course of the programme, participants believe that having support from another manager as a mentor outside their training base gives them the opportunity to be able to discuss important issues in confidence in relation to their development and progress that they are not able to discuss with the trainee manager at their units. An employee in the scheme explained;

I have got two mentors. I have got one that is my manager, obviously which I see on a daily basis and I will sit down with her in the area like I said development role, any concerns can always get addressed and the support that I need. Also, I have got another mentor that is a manager from a different service whom I speak to one to one to one basis. She holds confidential any issues I discuss that I feel I cannot address with my manager where there is a conflict of interest and in such instances, I can address it with the other manager. (Trainee Deputy Manager 2)

As the findings indicated earlier in the managerial narratives, one of the challenges in the operationalization of the TM scheme was the unwillingness of a manager to develop employees assigned to her in the secondment programme. The management came up with the idea of having a second mentor outside the unit when this problem was identified to support the development of employees on the scheme. From the comment above, the idea of having a second mentor provides opportunities for employees to discuss their progress and concerns while undertaking the development programme as well as having a broader support from another manager when their immediate line manager is unavailable.

Fifthly, with respect to managing employee expectations in the secondment programme, an employee in the talent scheme raised the issue of work overload and the possibility of being demotivated if he is unable to secure a management position after undergoing the talent scheme.

What I find hard, to be honest, is that it can be hard as a trainee manager, you have got two roles. You are managing as well as team leading, so it is like two roles. So, I have got to pull out of the team leading role and jump into management and catch up on my job and then go back to team leader because I have got medication to do, monies to do, residents, to look after that I believe is challenging. So it can be really hard putting them all into one because you are doing two roles. (Trainee Deputy Manager 2)

He further commented;

I am really keen on being a manager because I will really find it hard going back to my team leader role because it is completely different. The level of understanding or the decisions you make is a massive difference and taking a step down; it will like just demotivate me. Staying where I now has proper motivated me and keeps me on my toe, it keeps me on the ball, and I just want to develop myself, and then take up extra qualification. Like they have introduced level five management degree that helps you one step closer to being a manager, this will contribute to putting me forward.

Evidence indicates that although there are positives of being in the talent scheme and a good support network for development as well as the opportunity to progress within the organisation, there appeared to be no support in managing the expectations of participants in relation to the additional responsibility which can stressful and very demanding. Secondly, there seem to be no measures in place to manage the raised employee expectations regarding opportunities available to them after the talent programme is completed. For example, not being able to get into a managerial position

for which the scheme was intended will be a setback and very demotivating which may lead to the employee eventually leaving the organisation.

A summary of empirical findings is presented below in Table 5.1

Table 5.1 Summary of empirical findings

Key findings	Hotelco- (Hospitality):	Parcelco- (Logistics)	Careco-(Healthcare):	Techco- (Manufacturing)
Why TM?	Staff development, retention and competition for best talent	Rapid growth in business, retention, , developing skills for and competence for competitiveness	Growth and expansion of business, retention and succession management	Organisational growth plan, staff retention and filling up of key positions that impacts organisation success
Talent definition	All employees- Everyone is believed to be talented	People with great skills who are able to take a step toward a bigger role and employees that exceeds performance expectations	People with valuable skills that can help progress the organisation forward	People that show potential to develop outside of their existing role
Approach to TM and TM definition	Inclusive: Nurturing, training and developing all employees across all levels and departments TM = good HRM	Exclusive: Identifying, developing and retaining talented individuals who will be leaders and business drivers of the future. TM = classification of employees (A, B & C)	Exclusive: Promoting talent from within to make sure there is a succession of staff into leadership and managerial positions. TM = Succession planning	Exclusive: Developing high potentials to fill key pivotal positions. TM = Pivotal position
TM processes	Identification: all employees are classed talented. Development: itineraires, Visa, GM pass, service Attitudes and globe-trotter Retention: Professional development, and career advancement	Identification: AAE tool, interviews and assessment centres. Development: graduate scheme and leadership programme. Retention: benefits and competitive salary	Identification: supervision records and Line manager's judgement. Development: mentoring, secondments and shadowing. Retention: long service wage scheme and medical	Identification: nine box grid, strategic talent review. Development: Ready Now and Ready Next scheme which involves Mentoring, Coaching and Secondments. Retention: salary

	opportunities		insurance	adjustment, annual and merit recognition.
Who is responsible for TM?	HR driven supported by Heads of departments (Managers)	Senior management with support from Line Managers and the HR team	Senior management with the support of HR and line Managers.	Managers with the support of HR. There is a big demand for employees to identify and push for their own development
Evaluation	Carried out on participant reactions, learning and job behaviour. Results (impact & ROI) not measured. Retention, staff feeling valued and job satisfaction are seen as positives of the move-up scheme.	Evaluation is carried out on participant reactions, learning and job behaviour Results (impact & ROI) not measured. Evidence of better skills, engagement and retention are positives of the talent scheme	Evaluation is carried out on participant reactions, learning and job behaviour. Results (impact & ROI) not measured. Successes of 15 deputies and managers promoted through the TM scheme.	Evaluation is carried out on participant reactions learning, job behaviour - Results (impact & ROI) not measured. Indication of retention in key positions is viewed as a positive contribution of the scheme.
Challenges in running TM initiatives	Time constraint, employees' unwillingness to develop into more senior positions.	Getting senior management on board for the TM initiative, lack of communication of the scheme to managers and employees unwillingness to progress	Managing the expectations of employees undergoing the talent programme, time constraint and getting managers on board in the TM initiative.	Inadequate time for training due to business demand, increasing work load with diminishing resource and managing employee's expectations
Employees experience of TM	Very transparent and openly communicated. Employees feel valued and believe they have opportunities to progress their careers through the scheme.	Partly transparent (secrecy in leadership programme). Poor communication of TM processes. Excluded employees feel satisfied about their progression and development	High transparency and good communication of the TM initiative. Excluded employees concerned about favouritism in selection process due to line manager's judgement.	TM initiative is very secretive and there is poor communication of the TM processes. Excluded employees feel disappointed at the lack of development and progress.

5.3 PARCELCO

Parcelco is the UK's leading consumer delivery specialist handling more than 190 million parcels each year. It provides a range of affordable and flexible delivery options to work, home, neighbour, ParcelShop or safe place that is convenient for the consumer and fit within their increasingly busy lifestyles. Parcelco operates a network of 9,500 lifestyle couriers and over 4,000 ParcelShops within the UK. This multi-channel approach is designed to offer a convenient and hassle-free delivery experience to its clients and to ensure that up to 95 percent of parcels are delivered the first time. The organisation works with a broad range of leading high street, catalogue and online retailers in the UK including Tesco, Debenhams, Next Directory, ASOS, Arcadia Group and John Lewis. The organisation promotes itself as an environment-friendly business and is a pioneer of the 'no pollution, just parcel' initiative (delivering parcels with electric powered cars with zero percent emission) in central London which is aimed at reducing pollution and improving air quality.

Research informants include the following: Talent & Resourcing Manager, Learning & development Manager, I.T Manager, Senior Communication Manager, two employees involved in the talent scheme and an employee outside the talent scheme.

5.3.1 Talent management at Parcelco

Talent definition

Talented individuals in Parcelco are seen as people with qualities who can advance into a more senior position and who have the drive to succeed. Talent is also viewed in relation to leadership as individuals that exceed performance expectations. The learning and development manager explained;

Talented employees are people who can make a step toward a bigger role quicker than anybody else, take on a more complex role, and they have got the desire to succeed.

The Senior Communication Manager commented;

A talent must have specific attributes to be not just a manager but a leader. It is got to be somebody that is inspirational, is passionate about the company, passionate about what they do, be a hard worker. Somebody that exceeds performance expectations and that has got the right behaviours that conform to the culture of our business.

From the above, the definitions of talent denote two things (a) potential for the future which relates to the possibility that an employee can progress into a more critical role or senior position from their current job role. In other words, they have the qualities and capabilities to become more productive in a more advanced role in the future beyond

135

their current input in the organisation. This definition was visible in the organisation's graduate talent scheme programme (b) high performer which relates to the construct that some employees manifest exceptional output in terms of their competency and performance in a specific field of expertise or a more generalised area within the organisation. This meaning of talent was evident in the definition of talent for the leadership development programme in the organisation.

TM conceptualization and approach

The approach to talent management is exclusive with a focus on two talent groups namely; managerial and graduate talent. The graduate scheme is a 15-month programme designed to recruit fresh talent and to develop future managers across different department (operations) within the organisation. The leadership development initiative is an 18-month programme run with a partner University and designed to embellish the knowledge and capabilities of employees in senior managerial positions. TM at Parcelco represents a strategic activity designed to identify, develop and retain talented employees who constitute a fraction of the organisation's workforce.

TM is about working with probably your top 5% of people in the organisation, whom you want to retain, develop and also create into your leaders or specialist or business drivers of the future. (Learning and Development Manager)

Evidence indicates that this elitist approach to TM focuses on few employees that Parcelco sees as key drivers of organisational growth and competitiveness. Findings also reveal a classification of employees into three distinct performance ratings; (a) top performers which further divided into Exceeded- employees whose performances have greatly impacted on the organisation's success and Achieved Plus- employees achieving results and maintaining high standards, (b) middle performers- who achieve expected performance standards, (c) low performers which are divided into; Achieve minus-employees displaying inconsistencies with expected performance standards; Did not Achieve- employees not meeting expected performance standards.

From the above, TM practice can be seen as a differentiation of the workforce where there is a focus on developing top-performing individuals who are exceeding performance expectations and achieving results that can significantly impact on the organisation's success.

TM responsibility and processes

Evidence indicates that although the organisation has a talent and resourcing department, the responsibility of talent management is a coordinated activity within the senior management team.

I work very closely with our organisation learning and development manager because obviously, he is instrumental with filling some of the gaps and training and teaching people, coaching in areas maybe they want to go or the areas we need that talent, so we work very closely together. HR assists with recruitment and they help the line managers to manage performance. (Talent and Resourcing Manager)

The responsibility for managing talent in the organisation cut across three main departments namely; talent and resourcing, organisation and learning capability, and the HR department. The line managers are involved in the talent identification process; they are assisted by the HR department during appraisals and in managing employee performance. Two senior managers (talent and resourcing, organisation and learning capability) appear to be at the forefront of managing TM within the organisation and work in close cooperation in designing and driving the talent management scheme. Interviewees believe the responsibility for managing talent should sit with the management and the individual employee.

The organisation utilises different approaches to identifying talent for the two schemes it operates; for the graduate scheme, talented employees are identified through a series of activities including assessment centres, interviews and open day fair.

We do go through some extensive assessment, so we look at them for example if they have come into business recently, we have got that information when we recruited them. So we already know where their strengths are and where their development needs are, so we would have that from their initial recruitment. (Talent and Resourcing Manager)

For the leadership development programme, since not all the managers are considered for the scheme, the process of selection begins with more senior managers nominating and supporting managers in their departments for the programme. An assessment of the suitability of a manager for the scheme is carried out based on the outcome of the potential-performance matrix (nine box grid) before the nomination process. Interested managers also will have to put forward an application for them to be considered for the programme. Successful applicants are subsequently informed about their place in the scheme.

Parcelco utilises both internal and external means of developing identified talents within the organisation. Employees on the talent leadership initiative embark on an 18-month training course outside of the organisation with a partner university while the graduate scheme involves participants undergoing a 15 months programme with the different departments within the organisation. Parcelco also runs some in-house courses on leadership for managers on team leading, leadership management and recruitment.

Interviewees at management level emphasised the importance of retaining talented employees especially as the business is experiencing fast growth. The organisation

offers benefits and very competitive pay as a means of retaining employees and this in their view has had a positive impact on retention.

Going out and getting more people is not the answer, so has our business keeps growing, what happened in the past they just brought more people in, that is daft because it is eating into the margin. So we need to make our people better, and more capable of doing better things, we can then pay them more, reward them better, retain them without increasing headcount or increase in overhead and actually growing people that we have got here. (Learning and Development Manager)

Although employee retention is important, I personally I'm a believer that you need some turnover in an organisation. Otherwise, you do not have any fresh blood. So we have less than 8% turnover in the company, and that in my view its quite unhealthy because it means you do not have an opportunity to get people developed into the next role because there is dead men shoe nobody leaves, we have a few retirees but people are not leaving. (Talent and Resourcing Manager)

Evidence from the above indicates that although respondents believed that retaining talented employees is important, there is also a concern of the organisation having a low turnover of less than 8% which they feel may be unhealthy. With low turnover, it is believed there will be limited opportunities to get fresh ideas and people developed into the next role which could be a challenge for the competitiveness of the organisation.

Why talent management?

Rapid growth in business (expansion), retention, competition, developing skills and competencies, reducing the cost of hiring by promoting from within according to the interviewees are some of the chief reasons why a talent management initiative is undertaken at Parcelco. For example, the Senior Communication Manager in explaining why the organisation is into talent management stated;

Our industry is constantly changing, we need talents, we need experience, we need people, and we need talent to develop new products and to develop new services. Our market is constantly changing, ten years ago we did not have smartphones towards shopping online, but now you can send a parcel by a click. We need talented people to be at the forefront of innovation really. It is also if we can promote internally, looking for ways that we can progress people through the organisation, and this reduces cost significantly.

The Talent and Resourcing Manager further explained;

It is very much the business reason, we are growing, and we are a company that is growing very quickly. In the two and a half years I have been here we have put on 40% extra profit revenue as well as having new employees coming into the organisation. So that is growing, that is growing very fast and if you are not careful and you bring too many people in too fast that begins to change the culture of the organisation. So growing our own talent is very important because they already know the business. So managing talent has to be a business case otherwise, why do it?

TM from the above is seen as leverage for achieving success through people in the current business environment where globalisation and technological advancement has brought stiffer competition and new ways of executing business strategies. It is believed that for the organisation to remain competitive and innovative, it has to invest in employees who can significantly contribute to its success. Findings also reveal that with the growth and expansion of services the organisation is experiencing, there has been an increase in the number of new managers recruited which has been quite expensive. It is believed that growing and promoting talent within will reduce as well as help maintain the values and culture of the organisation.

Evaluation

Evidence indicates that the organisation has an evaluation system that assesses participant learning and development in any given developmental activity.

We look at what we are trying to achieve in the first place. Obviously, the skill sets we require whether they will be soft skill or whether they will be qualification type skills and then at the end of their development programme, however, long that might be. It might be a three days course; it might be a yearlong programme, it could be 15 months graduate programme, whatever it is we then evaluate where those people are at the end of it. (Talent and Resourcing Manager)

Evaluating the impact of talent development is seen as an important activity as it allows the organisation to assess whether the aim of the development programme embarked upon is achieved or not. Although Parcelco does some evaluation in respect to the talent programme, such as evaluation of participant reaction, learning and job behaviour during the programme, in terms of results (impact of TM on the organisation or ROI), there are no data or measurements as to what impact talent programme have on the organisation. It is believed that having low turnover, managers having better skills and engagement, excellent productivity are signs that the talent initiative is working.

Challenges

Findings reveal that although the TM initiative at Parcelco appears to be achieving its aim of developing and retaining talented employees who significantly contributes to its competitiveness, it was not without its challenges. The Talent and Resourcing Manager explained;

Getting the talent initiative through the board was a challenge at the beginning because they thought they were doing it, they thought they knew their people, but the goal post move in businesses, they always move. I think getting the board to understand what could look like for the future not now but for the future so that we could develop those people that we believe have what it takes to make the company competitive.

She further explained that an employee's personal circumstances could be a big challenge in managing talent.

Sometimes its domestic reasons, I mean we have a guy who for family reasons is not able to move into a higher position, we know he is talented and has more to give and contribute to the organisation, but at the moment he is unable to progress due to personal circumstances.

Evidence indicates that lack of transparency and poor communication of the Leadership scheme in addition to the above and also a big concern for managers excluded from the programme. It was not communicated why some managers were part of the initiative and others were not and the criteria for selection was not known which left some senior managers feeling very uncomfortable and dissatisfied with TM initiative. Getting the talent leadership initiative through the board level presented a challenge initially because the board failed to realise the need for further investment in its leadership cadre. Also, work-life balance impacted on the ability of the organisation to progress some talented employees through the scheme into a more senior position which resulted in the organisation recruiting externally.

The Future of TM

Interviewees express the view that TM is a huge part of the business future especially being in a competitive industry where there is continuous development and innovation of new services. For example, the Senior Communication Manager stated;

Talent management I think is going to be very important because we are growing as a business. So to stay competitive in the logistics industry, we have to have the best talent to develop new and offer new services and to make sure that our clients stay with us and that we attract new customers. It is all about the people we drive that determine the success of our business, so I think it is going to become increasingly important.

She further explained;

We are growing at such a rate that we need the people to fill these vacancies. We cannot go externally all the time; we need to make sure that we have got a flow of people that are ready to step up to the next mark so we can keep being competitive.

Interviewees believe as Parcelco is growing and expanding at a fast rate, talent management must be at the forefront of the organisation policy to stay very competitive in the logistic industry. It is believed that in an industry where technological advancement and innovation of new product is key to success, identifying, developing and retaining talented employees remains a high priority.

5.3.2 Employees' experience of TM at Parcelco

Four main themes emerge from employees' views of TM, and these include transparency of the TM process, planning development, benefits of the initiatives and organisational support provided in the talent scheme.

Firstly, regarding transparency of the talent initiative, Parcelco provides information on its website about the learning and development opportunities available to employees which include both internal (training courses and secondment project) and external programmes (professional qualifications). Parcelco also emphasises that it cares about its employees and wants to see talented people grow from within the business as well as to see them develop to their full potential.

Evidence indicates transparency in the graduate scheme programme, while the leadership development programme appears to some degree less transparent which had led some managers to question the reason for the programme. When the decision to embark on leadership development programme for senior managers was taken by the board, there was a lack of communication about the introduction of the scheme. Also, because only certain population within the senior management were given the opportunity to go onto the programme as against all senior managers, some senior managers who were not selected to be part of the programme were unhappy about being excluded from the leadership development initiative.

Some rumblings so far are that when it first came out, the board were doing it, but it was not massively communicated as to why. So with a certain population of senior managers, they felt quite uneasy about the process because they did not have much involvement in it if they wanted. So perhaps there could be an element of secrecy. (Leadership Scheme Participant)

However, despite the lack of transparency in the leadership development initiative, evidence indicates that there appear to be an understanding of what the scheme entails by non-participants. For example, an employee outside the scheme commented;

This 18 months programme (Leadership programme) is aimed at senior managers and all managers with potential within our company. It is really about giving managers the opportunity to develop skills, knowledge and to further develop careers really

According to the interviewee, TM is critical for Parcelco competitiveness and for employee development. She suggested that it is important to continually improve the competence and skills of its leadership talent if the organisation is going to grow and expands its current market share in an environment where the nature of competition is on the increase.

As it was the case in the graduate scheme, senior managers who were selected for the leadership programme were duly informed about their position in the scheme. So within the organisation, it was obvious which senior manager was in the scheme and who was not. Findings reveal that the inability of the organisation to effectively communicate the reasons for the programme and why it is not available to all senior managers could result in the excluded managers being dissatisfied and demotivated and may subsequently lead to them leaving the organisation.

Secondly, development planning was another key finding that was visible from the employees' experience of TM. For participants in the graduate scheme, the initial development plan at the commencement of their first placement (4 months placement at the hub) is formulated by the management team, but the subsequent placements are driven by the participant's development plan (PDP). An employee in the graduate scheme commented about development plan and goal setting in the scheme;

I guess it is initially set up by talent and resourcing manager and the HR team. They obviously tell you what you need to go and do but from the placement that follows from your initial one, it is kind of your initiative to go and sit down with your new line manager and set your goals. (Graduate Scheme Participant)

Graduate scheme participants are responsible for their development to a great extent, and this involves setting development goals as well as prioritising their developmental needs. During placements, a participant's immediate line manager plays a key a role in their development by ensuring that participants fully understand the purpose and the significance of every development activity undertaken. They also help participants to get resources to facilitate their learning as well as creating opportunities for them to apply what they have learnt a real work situation. At the end of every placement, participants are expected to make a presentation of their experience in the form of a project on what they have learnt and achieved.

With the graduate scheme participants given the responsibilities of managing their development, and because there is no standardised structure for each placement regarding development plan by the organisation, there appear to be some challenges for participants in getting their priorities right with respect to their learning and development. The employee in the graduate scheme further commented;

After my first placement, I did not really know what I had to do, so I kind of was asking many questions whereas in the next placement when I go back into the hubs... I did the hubs last year; I want to get a bit more on management experience.

On the other hand, in the leadership readiness programme, the participant development plan is more structured and standardised around three key areas of the organisation. A senior manager in the programme explained;

Each module in the programme is based on a different area of the company. We have operations, finance, and commercial. So we learn about the various aspects of the business and how it all works. So we have become well-rounded managers, and I think it is very important for managers especially the people who are considered to be talents and future leaders of the business so have such exposures.

The leadership course is run in partnership with a UK university, and the modules are structured into three core areas of the business with external and internal facilitators. Every two months in the 18-month programme, participants attend a two-day workshop. They also undertake work based projects, and at the end of the course, successful participants are awarded a postgraduate certificate in executive leadership by the partner university.

Thirdly, regarding the benefits of the TM programme, respondents in both talent schemes believe that being on the programme has provided them with the opportunity broaden their social networks with people of various skills and discipline. Interviewees commented;

So, there are a lot of different people who we work with and are important to us and one very important thing for this company is the cross- functional teams. So we have people from HR, finance, operations, sales, working on the projects together in the programme. So we get expertise from across the business, so that is one thing this programme helps us to achieve and I've noticed a difference between when I started about a year ago, the difference that it is made for me has been fantastic. (Leadership Scheme Participant)

Another thing that has been quite important for me is the networking I have managed to do while I have been on all these rotations (placements). You might only ever meet all the people out there over a 20 year period working here something like that. Yes I don't know but if you are going as depot manager, you are not going to meet all people at different area of the business because your job is at the depot, whereas if I have problem with future roles I will probably let someone whom I have met and worked with, who works in that area you can tell things will be a bit easier. (Graduate Scheme Participant)

The data indicated that the talent scheme provides opportunities for participants to develop necessary skills required for advancing their careers as well as helping them boost job confidence. Participants suggest that the opportunity to effectively apply what they have learnt through stretchy assignments and work-based projects enabled them to embed skills into their behavioural repertoire.

Fourthly, as regards the support while undergoing the talent scheme, evidence suggests that respondents see the support provided by the organisation has being adequate. For example in the graduate scheme, support for employee development is provided

primarily by their immediate line manager and additional support is given by an assigned mentor within the business.

In terms of my line manager's support, it is more of day to day objective setting. My mentor is definitely more like I said strategic and long term. Like my mentor, he is not going to necessarily sit me down with set objectives whenever I see him, but every time I see him he is trying to push me to do more and more to find out where I see myself in the company and gauging few of my interest and how I'm finding different placement, and then I go back and meet with my line manager every sort of 6 weeks we do sort of a review. (Graduate Scheme Participant)

In respect of support received by employees in the leadership development scheme, participants are appointed coaches from outside the organisation who support their development and provide advice or guidance in the course of the programme. A participant in the leadership scheme commented;

So every single person on the leadership readiness programme is given a coach who is external to the business. So when I have meetings regularly with my coach I talk to him about anything about my development. Moreover, it is about the skills that I have and how I am developing, my areas of strength and where I have to improve on my achievements and in general anything that has do with my current and future development.

Although not being part of the talent scheme, a respondent believed that the learning and developmental needs of all employees are catered for by the organisation, and while she would like to be part of the talent initiative in the future, she does not feel left out when it comes to getting support for securing other qualifications beneficial to their job roles.

I have regular 1:1 meetings with my line manager and then we have got what we call P3 which is the performance agreement that I have. We have got objectives set which are the company objectives that gets written down, but then we also have our own learning development objectives within it and then sort of through the 1:1, we talk and identify weaknesses and strength, what can we come out with and how can we go to get the help to get us on the right track to getting the best help we can (Employee outside the scheme)

Evidence suggest that employees outside the talent scheme feel much supported by their line managers; they are offered one-to-one supervision fortnightly which gives them the opportunity to discuss their developments and career progression within the organisation. During the meetings, employees are encouraged and given the opportunity to bring about an individual development plan, and then the manager gives guidance on how to achieve such plans which are then reviewed quarterly.

5.4 HOTELCO

Founded in 1967, Hotelco is a 4-stars International midscale brand for business & leisure travellers, with hotels located in the centre of the main international cities, tourist destinations and business districts. It operates 408 hotels (77,747 rooms) in 60 countries with about 31,000 employees. Within the UK, Hotelco operates 33 hotels which offer to look after the well-being of business and leisure travellers. It provides spacious modular rooms suitable for work and relaxation, balanced cuisine available 24 hours a day, meeting rooms, attentive and proactive staff, areas especially for children, relaxation areas and a strong commitment to sustainable development. The organisation promotes itself to its numerous customers as a sustainable brand that anticipates customer expectations and meets social and environmental challenges. Hotelco is committed to the planet and relies on a renowned environmental certification (ISO 14001) to structure its strategy for sustainable development.

The research informants from the UK operations were; Conference manager, Housekeeping manager, Room division manager, HR officer, Head of Operations, Conference coordinator and a Team member. All seven employees interviewed are involved in talent management activities.

5.4.1 Talent management at Hotelco

Talent definition

Talent at Hotelco refers to all employees as it is believed that every employee has got his or her strength that can contribute to the brand's success and make the organisation more profitable. In other words, talent is present in every employee. The HR Officer commented;

Every employee that works through our door is considered a talent from day one. Although we do not all have an equal amount of ability, every employee is unique and has something to contribute to our success.

Similarly, the Head of Operations explained;

We as a company value the contribution of every employee. So for us, everyone is talented no matter what department you belong to and regardless of the job you do. Apparently, all employees contribute to the success of the organisation in their own way whether as a manager, a team leader or a team member.

This view of talent indicates that there is no distinction between employee groups in respect to what added value they bring to the organisation i.e. everyone at every level is critical to the organisation's success. Every employee in every department is believed to have strength and uniqueness that can help the business brand become outstanding in

the services it provides its clients. Talent, therefore, is seen from the perspective of the contribution the entire workforce rather than a percentage of elite or high potential employees.

TM conceptualization and approach

The focus of talent management is on the totality of employees in the organisation, and thus TM is conceptualised as nurturing, training and developing all employees across all levels and departments. TM helps to identify and develop areas competence and strength in an individual employee at all levels and to help employees progress their careers in the organisation. The HR Officer explained;

Talent management is extremely important to our organisation. Doing business in the hotel industry is very competitive, and for us, the success of the organisation depends heavily on the professionalism of our staff and the services they provide to our clients. Our Move Up programme allows us to train and develop all employees at all levels. It helps us to identify and develop areas of strength in employees across the organisation. So it is important for the company to develop the team as a whole and not just a particular group of employees.

The Housekeeping Manager further commented;

The talent initiative in our organisation is a programme designed to help people develop and progress in their careers. Moreover, I think it does not matter on which level you are, you might be a team member or a team leader, it does not matter which level you are at the moment you still can progress you still can develop and this program is all about helping employees develop their careers.

At Hotelco, interviewees express the view that since all employees contribute to the brand's success by ensuring customer satisfaction, it is important for the organisation to provide easy access to the professional development of all staff through the Move-up talent initiative. Findings reveal that Hotelco acknowledges that every employee has the potential and capacity to contribute its success through their current and future performances. The Operations manager explained that even though the hotel may have excellent facilities, one bad customer experience with a junior member of staff, for example, a housekeeper may do a lot of damage on how its numerous clients perceive the organisation. Viewing all employees as uniquely contributing to the organisation's brand is seen as a high priority for success, and it is believed that managing all staff to their full potential is imperative for the organisation's success and competitiveness.

TM responsibility and processes

The move-up programme at Hotelco is an HR tool designed to enhance the professional development of all employees at every level. Evidence suggests the HR department

manages the talent scheme with the support of Head of Departments (HOD). The HR Officer commented;

The talent initiative is developed and managed centrally by the HR team, so every hotel in our brand goes through a similar development programme tailored towards employees' development and career progression. Heads of departments are important for us in this scheme, and they are equipped to facilitate most of our training as well as ensuring that learning is actually put into practice. For example in reservation, they have to physically supervise employees and make sure competencies are evident before they are signed off.

She further explained;

We do receive feedback and progress report monthly from the HODs, and where an employee has been assessed and not meeting expectation in their passport portfolio, the HR looks into this and provides further coaching and training because for us every employee is important and with the adequate support we believe they can reach their full potential.

Furthermore, the Rooms' Division Manager commented;

The HODs play various roles I will say, from recruitment to training of new employees. So from the beginning of employing somebody, then to inducting them into the company and introducing them into the talent programme like move-up, we work with the HR to ensure employees are given the best training that will enable them to provide excellent services to our customers.

From the above, while HR Managers provide the tools and guidance for the talent initiatives, the Managers/Heads of department facilitate most of the in-house training, and they are seen as being key to the success of the scheme. They are also responsible for ensuring that learning from the scheme is evident in day to day job behaviour. Although the organisation does offer some incentives to employees to progress their career within a short period, managers at Hotelco believe that each employee has a responsibility to be willing to progress their careers within the organisation.

In respect to talent identification, management at Hotelco believes each employee has his or own strength and rather than focusing on identifying high potential employees, the organisation is concerned about identifying and developing areas of competencies in employees that can potentially create added value to the organisation. Evidence indicates that both formal and informal learning and development activities are undertaken internally i.e. all employee development programmes in the talent scheme are facilitated within the organisation although in some instances this may involve different locations in which Hotelco operates. For example, in the Globetrotter professional development scheme which runs over the course of two years, participants are expected to work and train in three different hotel locations and also spend a year in another country. Evidence indicates that employee training and developments, as well as

career progression opportunity, continue to play a major role in employee retention. The Rooms' Division Manager noted;

Regarding the level of training and development opportunities provided by the company, I think it is important for me to say that the talent scheme has brought about job satisfaction for many employees and there is a high success of employee retention currently in the organisation. I will say out of 10 of us (HODs), probably 8 of us started as low-level employees and worked our way up, and I think most of us have had over six years' service. People feel very satisfied and valued when their training and development needs are met.

The HR Officer further explained;

We do have a lot of development opportunities through our move-up scheme, and this covers every employee at every level. So whether you are a team member, a team leader or a manager, there is a professional development programme tailored towards your development and career progression. Many of our staff members feel valued and motivated, and we are happy that they have continued their employment with us for so many years. We have employees who started as a receptionist and housekeeper, and today they are HODs. This I believe says a lot about our organisation.

Evidence indicates that career advancement, training and development opportunities and employees' feeling valued appears to play a major role in employee retention. According to a respondent in the conference department, there is a sense of feeling indebted to the organisation for her for career achievements because of the level of professional development she had acquired through the Move-up scheme. Findings further reveal that viewing every employee as talented and being able to contribute to the competitiveness of the Hotelco makes employees feel valued resulting in job satisfaction and motivation to progress their careers.

Why talent management?

Hotelco views the totality of its workforce as a source of competitive advantage in the hospitality industry. Interviewees believe that everyone (both frontline and behind the scene staff) significantly contributes to the organisation's brand by delivering excellent services to its numerous customers.

The hotel industry is so competitive in the current business environment we find ourselves and the only we can be successful is through our people, and that is why the organisation is so keen on investing in the professional development of all employees. The move-up scheme is designed to enable us to compete in the market place, retain our valued employees and provide excellent services to our customers. (Head of Operations)

From the above, employees are seen as the most valuable assets of the organisation and as such investing in the training and development of all staff across all levels is seen as a strategy to ensure that the added values employees bring to the organisation are fully utilised. Taking the view that all employees are talented emphasises the concept

that everyone is valued regardless of what position he or she occupy or what department they belong and that the success, competitiveness and profitability of the organisation is not dependent on a specific elite group or high potential employees.

Evaluation

In relation to evaluation, the organisation has in place a standardised assessment system that focuses on employee learning and how this is transferred to the work environment. The Rooms' Division Manager commented;

Regarding any training or development programme a member of staff goes on even managers we have an evaluation form that we have to complete while we are on training, its three copies. One stays with the HR manager; one stays with the employee, and one goes into their file and comes back to the hotel. So for any training that takes place there is also an assessment after the training, we have to evaluate what participants have learnt and how they will apply it on their jobs.

Similarly, the HR Officer explained;

It is important for us to assess what the impact of different programmes within the move-up scheme has on employees at all levels. We do have an evaluation that begins at the end of any learning and development activities. We get information on employee's progress to ascertain if learning outcome has been transferred into the job environment. Assessing the impact of training on employee behaviour is crucial to us if we are to stay competitive in the hospitality industry and ensure our employees provide excellent services to our numerous customers.

Evaluation is carried out on participant reactions, learning and job behaviour (i.e. elements of the Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model). However, in relation to the impact of the Move-up talent initiative on the organisation or return on investment (results), these are not measured but evidence indicates that there were various benefits accruing to the organisation from the inclusive talent scheme including; motivated and skilled staff, high staff retention and excellent customer service which represents a competitive advantage for the organisation.

Challenges

Although Hotelco's approach to TM is inclusive, evidence indicates that the operationalization of the Move-up scheme faces some challenges which appear to have an adverse impact on the talent scheme.

The main challenge is time, and I think we have to allocate more time to train and support staff development which is unrealistic at the moment because we are just so busy. In an ideal situation, we would love to have more time, but there are not just enough hours in the day. I think it could be ideal to have somebody in the hotel that is dedicated to training all the time because when it gets busy, we do not have the chance to train and develop staff. (Rooms' Division Manager)

For us, I think there is that problem that comes from the employees' willingness to want to progress. Some employees are satisfied with staying in the same position and we respect that and try to coach them to be the best that they can be but ideally as the organisation grows and expands having employees developing faster would be an added advantage. (Housekeeping Manager)

Although employee willingness to progress their careers appears to be a challenge, the Conference Manager noted that developing employees too fast can be counterproductive for the organisation. She explained;

We had a guy who got sacked for not doing his job properly just after five weeks into a senior position in my department. It was obvious from the beginning that he was not quite prepared for this role; I think people should be given time to develop steadily into more advance position rather just being pushed too quickly. It was not a good experience for the staff member and us, but he had to be relieved of his position. (Conference Manager)

From the above, insufficient time for training and development of employees on the part of managers is seen as an impediment to the talent initiative. Evidence indicates that managers are heavily involved in the move-up initiative, and they are mostly responsible for in-house training as well as providing support for developing staff competencies. Combining these additional responsibilities with their day to day managerial roles does not appear to give the managers sufficient time to focus on employee development and this impact on the quality of time allocated to training, coaching, and mentoring of employees. Furthermore, findings reveal that Hotelco provides some incentives (financial) to employees who are able to develop their careers at a faster pace, for example, the Itineraries scheme in the move-up programme (a talent initiative designed to help employees progress their roles). However, developing employees too fast was seen to be counterproductive in one department because of the failure of an employee to meet up performance expectation in a higher position. On the other hand, the unwillingness of employees to progress their careers was seen to be another challenge, and although the organisation acknowledges and accepts that some employees are happy and unwilling to progress from their current position this, it appears to impact the ability of the organisation to fill in vacant positions.

Future of TM programme

At Hotelco, managers believe that the TM initiative is of strategic importance to the future success of the organisation as it offers employees across all levels the opportunity to acquire competencies, improve knowledge and advance their careers. The Rooms' Division Manager commented;

This programme has being great for the business; I am not saying it is perfect, but from my experience and those of my colleagues it has made a significant contribution to staff development and retention. In terms of the future there will probably be changes, I mean

having worked for the company for 11 years, we use to have floppy disk now it's all e-learning you know. I have seen new initiatives like Itineraries incorporated into the programme which is giving the company competitive edge in the industry.

According to the HR officer, the move-up programme is a selling point for the organisation because it shows everyone is important and highly valued. Interviewees believe the programme runs well as it is and in the future, it will continue to be the priority of the HR team when it comes to the professional development of staff. The initiative is believed to have significantly contributed to high staff retention, highly professional and motivated staff as well as job satisfaction. Furthermore, through the move-up scheme, the organisation continues to experience junior level employees getting developed and moving into managerial positions.

5.4.2 Hotelco employees' experiences of TM

The employees' experience of TM reveals four main emerging themes: Firstly, transparency appears to be at the centre of the inclusive talent strategy adopted by Hotelco. Evidence indicates that there is an open culture that values, nurtures and supports all employees. Because every individual is considered a talent, employees are provided with equal opportunity to develop to their full potential and make a substantial contribution to the business success.

We have got the move-up programme in Hotelco which is explained to every employee on their induction at the hotel. The programme has different stages which you can progress through your career, and you can move at your own pace. That is your choice if you feel like it is something you want to move on to and progress in your career then you are given the opportunity and all the information you require. (Team Member)

The programme (move-up) usually starts up with the Hotelco service attitude, and we hold many sessions in the hotel for the different service attitudes. There is one service attitude per month, and our head of department runs each mini session with all of the team members in the hotel, and so you learn about each service attitude gradually. Once you have completed the entire service attitude, that's when you progress through the bachelor, the master, and graduate scheme. (Conference Coordinator)

The experience of employees from the above in respect to transparency shows that there is an understanding of what the TM initiative is all about as it is openly communicated to all employees in the organisation. Employees are introduced to the talent scheme during the induction phase of their employment, and they are encouraged to advance their careers through the various programmes in the move-up scheme. The organisation provides financial rewards to employees who are able to develop their level of competence to a master level within the first six months of their employment. For those willing to progress their careers, information is openly made available in the organisation's step-up brochure on what learning and development opportunities are available and a guide on how employees can progress their careers to the top.

A second theme emerging from the employees' experience is the standardised learning and development opportunity that is well known and made available to all employees at every level which corroborates earlier findings in the managerial narrative. The organisation's inclusive talent initiative has six (6) main programmes that accompany employee's professional development and career progression.

(a) Welcome: This is a programme designed to help employees assess their competence and area future development with their line manager. It also entails assisting employees to discover the organisation's brand and culture during their first six months of employment. (b) Itineraires (a French word meaning a road map for the employee journey) is a programme made available for all employees that offer prospects for career advancement. The programme is designed to help employees progress at their pace, improve and consolidate their knowledge and to help them acquire new competencies. There are three levels of qualifications in this scheme namely; Graduate- certified as being able to apply basic competence to job role; Bachelor- being able to master competencies needed to work autonomously and take initiatives on job roles; Master- able to pass on knowledge and assume the responsibility of the department when required. (c) Globe-Trotter: This is a two-year programme designed for employees who wish to become a Head of Department. This programme offers participants the opportunity to train and work in three non-identical hotels as well as spending a year in a different country on the same continent. (d) Gm Pass is a twelve-month programme designed for Heads of Department who wish to progress to the next stage in their career.it is a fast-track programme designed to speed up competence development for managers. (e) Visa aims to offer a whole host of opportunities to aid both professional and personal growth of employees who have performed remarkably well in their current role (f) Service Attitudes is designed to help employees uphold Hotel's excellence and service quality.

Interviewees acknowledge that having so much information on the opportunities available to them from the start of their employment was encouraging and that being able to advance their career remains a worthwhile experience. Furthermore, findings indicate that Hotelco does provide continuous development opportunities for employees who show potential and are willing to develop outside their existing role into a more senior management position. For example, an employee who was selected to participate in the management development programme explained;

I was nominated by my general manager for the management development programme (MDP). The programme is for anybody in the team who shows further potentials to progress their careers. So it could be a team leader moving up to head of the department

or a head of the department going to another department or beyond. So, it is anybody in the team who is looking to move roles to the next level. After one of my appraisals, I was nominated for the MDP programme. (Rooms' Division Manager)

The evidence further reveals that employees feel motivated and do sincerely believe that they can develop and progress their careers from the success stories of other employees especially those who started at a lower level and have been able to progress their careers into a senior management position.

I started as a housekeeper when I joined Hotelco, but years down the line I am now the manager responsible for housekeeping. The organisation provides opportunities for all employees at every level to develop and progress their careers, as long as you are willing to develop. (Housekeeping Manager)

In 1999, I started with the company as a full-time receptionist, with support and development opportunities, I have been promoted to the position of a conference and sales manager. This has been a success story for me, and although this post was challenging initially, at the moment, my department brings in about 26% of the business earnings. (Conference Manager)

From the above, evidence suggests that employees who started at lower level jobs were given the opportunity to develop and progress their careers. Furthermore, it was also evident that employees who have progressed from lower level jobs into senior positions were able to make a valuable contribution to the competitiveness and success of the organisation.

Thirdly, evidence from the employees' perspective reveals that when it comes to developing their competence and career prospects, there are no preferential treatments given to a certain population of employees over others.

Regularly we do have one to one meetings with the head of the department, one of the topics of the discussion centres around learning and development as well as career prospects in the organisation. My manager does inform me of any training session she thinks might benefit my development and sometimes I am able to identify a course or training I am interested in, and she does help to facilitate it through the HR department and senior managers. (Team Member)

During my yearly appraisal, looking at the level of experience I had in my department, I was asked what I think of my future career prospect in the organisation. So I said that I wanted to progress my career at that point to a leadership position and I got nominated for a leadership course on team leading by my area manager which I completed. The opportunities they have given me have been great and this has enabled me to get the best out of my career. (Conference Coordinator)

Findings reveal that employees understand that they are valued and that their learning and development remains the priority of the organisation. There is also the general feeling amongst employees that the success of the organisation hinges on the professionalism of every employee at all levels. They believe the organisation provides so much opportunity for their development and that the 1:1 supervision meetings by their

line manager as well as yearly appraisal by the HR gives them the opportunity to identify areas of future development and career progression.

Fourthly, in relation to benefits of the talent initiatives, evidence from the employees shows that the benefits of employee development generated two types of results including; Employee's personal outcome in terms of career prospects and promotion.

Personally, I have benefited from a lot of the training that is provided; they invest a lot of money in the learning and development which has helped me to get to the point I am today. So yes I really appreciate all the training I have been put onto, and I look forward to doing some more. (Conference Coordinator)

I have developed greater knowledge definitely in areas where I had less exposure before I started the programme. The leadership course was absorbing because you learn a lot about yourself as a person, how I act and react to situations, my personality style, how you manage people and their fears. Following the MDP programme, I was promoted to Rooms Division Manager. So I went from just been responsible for housekeeping to being responsible for three other departments, housekeeping, reception and maintenance. (Rooms' Division Manager)

Interviewees believed that undergoing series of talent development initiatives offered by the organisation enhanced their ability to progress their careers, as well as further develop areas of competence in their designated job roles.

Secondly, Organisational outcome: i.e. achieving the strategic goal of developing human capital for the profitability and competitiveness of the organisation. For example, while undergoing the MDP initiative, an employee was able to identify a problem of lower revenues from room sales in the hotel compared to other competitors and subsequently developed a package that helped increase the organisation's revenue. She explained;

The problem in the hotel was that the average room rates generated compared to other hotels in the city were low, so the question was how we could improve it. We have some rooms in the hotel that we class as executive rooms, so I put together a package to up-sale the rooms and included things like bathrobes, complimentary WIFI, free movies. So it was the case of the right market, selling it at the right price, training the staff and it was a success. And it added money into the average rate over the period that I operated it, so it was a great success. (Rooms Division Manager)

From the above, interviewees believe that the organisation's investment in employees learning and development brought about positive impacts both for the employees and the organisation. Managers express the view that the structured training and development programme on the move-up scheme helped develop employees' areas of strength as well as broadening skill competencies which in turns contributes the competitiveness and the success of the organisation.

5.5 TECHCO

Techco is a diversified global technology and industrial leader serving customers in more than 150 countries. The 170,000 employees of Techco create quality products, services, and solutions to enhance energy and operational performance of buildings; lead-acid automotive batteries and advanced batteries for hybrid and electric vehicles; and interior systems for automobiles. Techco serves the automotive and construction industries through four main business units: Building Efficiency, Global WorkPlace Solutions, Automotive Experience and Power Solutions. The success of Techco is believed to be enabled by the commitment and dedication of its employees around the world. With the organisation's continued growth focus, it creates opportunities where employees can express ideas, make a difference and build their future. To remain competitive, Techco believes it is crucial to invest in skills development and leadership capabilities of employees they consider a source of competitive advantage. The organisation runs an internal leadership institute that embraces the diversity of thought and experience in the automobile industry.

Research informants in the interviews were a Senior Manager, Engineering Manager, HR specialist, two high potential employees and an employee outside the talent scheme.

5.5.1 Talent management at Techco

Talent definition

The managers' view of talent relates to high potential employees who have or show the capacity to develop into a higher position in the future.

A talent is anyone that shows potential to develop outside of their existing role into a more critical role. So for us, a talent would be someone with a unique ability that is able and ready to progress into very strategic positions within the organisation. (HR Specialist)

As a company operating in the automotive industry, we do have a general skill which is what people need to do their job, and I think referring to talent, these are individuals with exceptional skills, high potential employees whose skills could be more beneficial to the organisation in various positions other than their current role. So there are the skills that people have got that we are not tapping into and using at the moment. (Engineering Manager)

Another dimension to the meaning of talent relates to specific skills and characteristics that define high potential employees. A senior manager commented;

So in purchasing, for example, its skills such as systems procedure, commercial negotiation cost analysis, communication, presentation, a very broad spectrum of competency in delivering the role and again the individual needs to be driven to do that. We are looking for people that are motivated to drive themselves to achieve that

development beyond their current positions, that in itself might be a talent. We are looking for people with personality, drive and ability, who have the strength in themselves to deliver at a higher level.

From the above, talent is conceptualised as high potential employees, and these represent individuals with distinct qualities who can productively contribute to the success of the organisation in the future. In other words, employees with valuable abilities who can progress into more senior positions that can impact significantly on the firm's competitiveness and success are classed as talented. This definition of talent suggests that not all employees are seen as being able to significantly impact the company's performance which implies that only a fraction of the workforce is identified as high potential employees.

TM conceptualization and approach

The approach to talent management at Techco is exclusive, and the focus of the talent initiative is on pivotal positions which are basically on salaried positions i.e. managers and employees who have supervisory roles within the organisation. The scheme is divided into three levels; 'Leading self' initiative is structured for employees at middle management level, 'leading people' is a talent scheme for employees in the plant management team level with direct report who are responsible for people and 'leading growth' is designed for senior management level employees who can impact the growth of the organisation on a larger scale.

According to the Senior Manager, TM can be looked at from two perspectives in terms of what it brings to the organisation and its employees. He commented;

Talent management delivers strength and sustainability for the organisation and also it delivers strength for the individuals as they are recognised for their competencies. We want to retain employees in strategic positions who will put us first on the queue when it comes to winning business and maintaining relationships with the customers.

From the above, TM is viewed from the perspective of identifying pivotal positions that can considerably impact on the competitiveness and the success of the business. Although it is also viewed in relation to what benefits TM brings to the organisation as well as its employees, evidence indicates that the aim of the programme is mostly focused on pivotal or the 'A' positions. According to the HR Specialist, talent management implies managing star positions that contribute significantly to the organisation's success

Talent management is reviewing the resources we have within our organisation and mapping against what gaps, huge gaps we may have and then putting in a plan to get the talent ready to seal those gaps and plug those gaps, so we don't have to go and

recruit externally and also providing experience for the employees that matches their needs, their development needs. (HR Specialist)

Findings reveal that this approach to talent management underlines the importance of critical positions rather than talented employees i.e. TM is seen as a strategic activity that focuses on identifying and developing talented employees to fill key positions that differentially contributes to the organisation's competitiveness.

TM responsibility and processes

Managers play significant roles in the talent management process; they are given the responsibilities of identifying and managing high-potential employees within their departments through performance appraisals and a yearly strategic talent review (STR) which is carried out in conjunction with HR and the senior management team.

Talent management program is supported by the HR, but the owners are really the managers. We encourage the managers to take ownership of the process and identify their talent and then come to us to see what can do to help support the talent or fill the gap where there is a lack talent. (HR Specialist)

The HR department advises on and facilitates the talent management process; it supports managers with the development of identified talents within the organisation. Individual talents have a responsibility to identify and push for his/her development i.e. it is expected of employees to identify and put forward their training and development needs to the management.

Talented employees are identified through a 'strategic talent review' (STR). The STR takes into consideration learning evaluation model (LEM) which looks at employees' behaviour, and the employee's performance and potential appraisal (nine box grid). Employees who come out top are believed to have high potentials or are distinguished and are then considered as talent ready to be developed. After the STR is completed, successful employees are placed in the talent pool and areas of development are subsequently identified.

Techco operates an internal leadership institute where most employee learning and development takes place, and the Institute also sources external training according to the developmental needs of employees. Identified high potential employees in the talent scheme (leading self, leading people and leading growth) go through two talent development processes namely; ready now and ready next. The ready now initiative looks at a 12-month process of getting talents prepared for a higher level role that may be required within the organisation in immediate terms. The 'ready next' initiatives focus on developing talents for a more future role, i.e., looking at developing talents for roles in a five-year plan (longer term). Other tools for developing talent within the organisation

include offering job secondments of 12-24 months to identified talent as well as providing coaching and mentoring.

Retaining talent is another important process in the talent management programme at Techco, findings reveal that the organisation has a retention policy that looks at annual recognition through achievement, merit recognition and salary adjustment. It also looks at providing an opportunity for career progression within the organisation as a means of keeping employees from going to a rival firm. According to management respondents, the organisation offers many possibilities for development where people want to improve their competencies, and it is believed that investing in employees has resulted in low staff turnover.

Why talent management?

The organisation has a ten-year growth plan, and it is believed that the only way it is going to achieve its aim and maintain its current business success as a global company operating in over 150 countries is by investing in people because it is believed when people grow the organisation grows. It is emphasised that growing skills and competence in a technologically advanced industry can position the organisation as a leader in the automotive industry as well as give it a competitive advantage in the global arena.

We have got to drive a leading edge in competence, skill set both operationally and with the business units to make sure that when the customer have business to nominate, our company will be the first company they will want to come to, they know we are specialist in knowledge and competence, they know that we are dependable as an organisation in terms of the latest innovations and advancement in this industry. (Senior Manager)

Furthermore, the HR Specialist explained;

Talent management is the future of the business. That is why we need to look at it and make sure we have got high potential employees ready to step into key positions for example in five years' time. If we have not got the talent that we need, this will affect growth and will mean hiring externally which is not cost effective for the organisation.

Talent management in Techco highlights the importance of investing in people who have the potential to develop and move into more critical positions. Interviewees attribute this to the organisational growth plan, retention strategy, filling of skills gaps, growing skill sets and competence management. It is believed losing key employees to a rival firm will be unhealthy for the organisation in a very competitive automobile industry.

Evaluation

The organisation has in place a central team that constantly looks at the value of the training system and how the talent management process is carried out. Performance

appraisal as well other skill metrics are utilised in the evaluation process and as the senior manager noted;

Employees undertaking the talent programme have to complete feedback from their position on the training they have undertaken, and then beyond that, there are all more processes to a period of time within its three months, six months, nine months and twelve months to track what they achievement has been beyond that training. If participants have not met their development target within the expected time frame, further development is provided through training or mentoring or coaching.

Assessing the impact of the programme on the employee learning and development remains a priority as this enables the organisation to ascertain what has been achieved and how it has been applied to the work setting. Evidence indicates that evaluation was carried out on participant reactions, learning, job behaviour after the programme but in terms of results (impact of TM on the organisation or ROI) these were not measured. Participants believed that positive indicators like low turnover of employees in critical positions, employees acquiring and developing greater skills and competencies are a good indication the organisation is doing something right.

Challenges

Interviewees acknowledge that due to the nature of the business Techco operates in (automobile), there is always the pressure of work overload which impacts the ability of managers to support the development of high potential employees. The senior manager commented;

A big challenge for us in managing talent is workload because there has always been an increasing workload with diminishing resource and the system and procedures here implies that there is a reduction in resources available to us as managers; we are still expected to deliver results in our department which makes things very challenging.

Similarly, the Engineering Manager explained;

Well, I think the ultimate is we are a business, and we are here to do a job and make money and ensure that customers are satisfied with the products and things like that. So what you find is that the client will say I want this and I want it now, and everybody is going you know 24/7, 100 miles our hour to deliver to the customer and I think what happens then is that the focus is on product and customer rather than talent management.

Furthermore, the HR Specialist noted;

There might be a downside to talent management if for example a certain employee is identified as high potential, and then we do not have the ability to move them as we would like to in the organisation. This might affect the morale of employee and turn the employee off if nothing is happening regarding development opportunities. At the moment, the result of strategic talent review (STR) is not discussed with the employee and sometimes that may not always be the ideal thing, but that is kind of risk or challenge we are actually dealing with in our process.

159

From the above, the operationalization and implementation of talent management is not without its challenges at Techco, and these include inadequate time for training due to business demand, increasing workload with diminishing resource, and managing the expectations of employees in the talent management process. Because of the challenges in managing the expectation of high potential employees the organisation was facing, it implemented a policy whereby the result of the STR is not communicated until opportunities for development and progression becomes available.

The Future of TM

As a leading business in the automotive industry where the innovation of products is central to success and profitability, managers expressed the view that talent management as a core business strategy will remain a top priority for the organisation in order for it to maintain the current level of growth and competitiveness.

We need to keep ahead of our competitors when it comes to innovating new products. We do business in over 150 countries, and the only we can remain at the front in the automobile industry is to invest in skill development of our people continually and to retain them. For example, to ensure we maintain our position as business leaders, we have got in our department employees who are in place to look for new ideas, develop new product and study the market trend. These people are critical to our business strategy, so managing talent is right for our business. (Engineering Manager)

The HR Specialist further commented;

Talent management is important for our business, and it is here to stay. I think for the next five years certainly we will keep to the approach we have got which has helped identified and developed high-potential employees into key positions. We have experienced low turnover at managerial levels which is good for our business.

Similarly, the Senior Manager noted;

It (TM) will always be there and dependent upon guidelines and requirement based upon the development of the business and industry in general. For best business practices and people management, talent management will inevitably intensify and grow, and it will be at the forefront of our business strategy.

From the above, interviewees believe that TM is a huge part of the business strategy especially being in a competitive industry where innovation is critical for business growth and competitiveness. Techco is keen to push TM forward and to ensure that it is not another statistics of an organisational initiative that will no longer be in use or discarded in the nearest future.

5.5.2 Employees experience of TM at Techco

Three main findings emerge from the employee's perspectives on TM in Techco including transparency of the TM process, learning and development opportunities

provided by the organisation and the lack of gender diversity in the talent pool. There is a consensus at Techco from the management perspective that the organisation grows when its employees grow. For it to attract and retain talented employees, Techco provides information on its website on the type of support and development opportunities available to employees at every stage of their career and these include; experiential learning, job secondments and formalised learning programmes. Techco operates a leadership expectations model (LEM) that defines its business and people processes. This model is designed to support the values, vision and goals of the organisation. Moreover, it also guides initiatives such as high potential skill-building and employee development programmes.

Despite a line-up of learning programmes as well as leadership development initiatives on the organisation's website, evidence from employees (within and outside the talent pool) reveal that there is a lack of transparency of how the TM initiative is operationalized i.e. employees enlisted in the talent pool and what criteria were utilised in the selection processes. Employees both within and outside the talent pool showed a lack of clarity in the understanding of the TM initiatives and its processes.

From the talent side of things, I do know that at Techco we have what is called strategic talent review. I do not understand completely how that works; I honestly don't know because it is all confidential. So I do not get involved, it is at a much higher level that talent management is discussed, but I believe that managers obviously recommend employees to the strategic management review and those people are looked at most closely, this is what I understand. (High Potential Employee 1)

There is a very formalised talent management process which is coordinated by the HR, but I believe it is managed by local management themselves in each location, and I do not know the full in and out of it. I'm not privy to it; I'm not at the right level. What I would say about it though because it's managed by local management, it is very subjective based on the local culture at each site. Based on the conversations I have had rather than first-hand knowledge, it is rather more legalistic of playing the favourites. (Employee outside the talent scheme)

What they are trying to do is to bring about a point where they are identifying people skill and things like that. They are utilising their resources a lot better should I say but so far I do not think they are using the talent pool they have effectively which sometimes leads to people leaving because they do not think they were getting the best out of what they could bring for the company eventually. (High Potential Employee 2)

From the employees' perspectives, very little is known about the talent initiatives operated, and because of the exclusive nature of the TM strategy adopted, there is a concern of favouritism of certain employees over others. A participant in the talent pool believed that although the organisation is utilising its resources efficiently by concentrating on the development of high potential employees, the approach to talent management is not getting the best from staff and has a brought about a situation where

certain employees are leaving because they think they their skills are underutilised. Interviewees appealed for more transparency in the process and an open culture where junior staff member's development is championed by managers as against making it the responsibility of employees. For example, an employee in the talent pool commented;

I suppose for me in respect to improving the current scheme; I would like employees to be given a little more insight into the talent scheme. I did not know this strategic talent review happened until I was five years in the organisation. I think it would be a bit more beneficial to sort of open this up to the lower level of the business where employees can also be recommended for the scheme. I think sometimes we overlook some talents because they are not out there saying; look I have got this talent. So I think it should just be a little more open all levels rather than just the senior manager level. (High Potential Employee 2)

Secondly, in relation to learning and development opportunities, evidence indicate that there is a feeling of disappointment on the part of employees at the junior level because of the very limited opportunities available to them as it appears that the vast majority of the organisation's resources is directed at a small population of the workforce. An interviewee commented;

There is an annual appraisal, and the line manager should make recommendations in respect to learning and development, but I have not seen any evidence to that. For example, in the site where I work, the training courses are not there, it is not transparent what is on offer, nor is it widely communicated how you get to it, It is very much word of mouth. You need to ask the right people the right question, such that most of the training offered to line staff is online courses and with occasional classroom course probably one per year and you must ask for you to be given that opportunity. If you are not successful in the first instance, you must keep asking until you are able to get onto the training programme. (Employee outside the talent Scheme)

On the other hand, participants in the talent scheme talked about opportunities for development that are available to them but that they will have to ensure that they put themselves forward when such opportunities arise.

We have our annual reviews, obviously with your manager, they are done towards November time and then in those you not only go over the last year and whether you've reached your goals, you also plan for the next year, and in that you can suggest training you require, or you think you should have and you can put that in your plan so that it's up to you then to force your way to go out and sort it out. (High potential employee 2)

It is really up to you, how you can to an extent manage and progress your career. They do not necessarily identify or set you apart or give a certain report and say this person has X and Y skill, therefore, let us harness those skills and utilise them in certain areas. You have to put yourself forward kind of thing and say I'm good at this, I'm good at that, therefore, I think the role suits me, and then you apply for it kind of thing. That is what has been my experience. (High Potential Employee 1)

Evidence indicates that there are differences in the learning and development opportunities offered by the organisation to different employee groups. For the high potential employees, opportunities are provided although they will need to put

themselves forward for such opportunities while for junior level employees, development opportunities are relatively scarce. Also, although annual appraisals are provided yearly to employees where learning and development needs are discussed, employees are left to cater for their development by identifying training programmes they are interested in which will be beneficial to their development (they are expected to manage their development). Furthermore, evidence indicates that junior level employees are less impressed with the type of training opportunities made available to them which is mainly online courses and very limited classroom base (formal) training. Moreover, there is the belief from the employee's perspectives that junior level employees are left to look after their development while the organisation's attention is geared towards senior level employees, i.e. while developmental courses are organised for middle and senior management staff, junior level employees will have to push for their development.

An improvement in encouraging employee progression and development or to effectively manage employees will be changing the current culture where managers are not really involved in improving the capabilities or competencies of employees. I think a good starting point will be having a regular 1:1 with senior managers and I think employees should have a formal training development plan identified during appraisals and managers should be encouraged to support such plan. (High Potential Employee 2)

According to the interviewee outside the talent scheme, in order to stop employees leaving for rival firms, there is an imperative need for an improvement in the current practice where junior employees are made to manage their development with little or no input from their line managers. He suggested that while it is important to invest in employees at senior levels, the development of those at the lower level should be given some degree of attention.

Thirdly gender bias in the TM processes was evident from the experience of a high potential female employee. She commented;

I think Techco in the UK and in the automotive where I work is a very male dominated environment which to me I like, I enjoy that. That does not bother me. I think sometimes some of the women because we are not many, so we are overlooked in the organisation's talent management scheme.

She further explained;

I have been here ten years, and I've gone from just being an administrative assistant in a plant through to working in the business unit and in direct purchasing as a buyer. So over those ten years, I have progressed quite significantly from where I started. But to be honest, it was me that pushed these changes. So they were not going to pick me up from that admin assistant. I could have carried on in that job forever, but I pushed for some development. It's been more about pushing to go on various training, to learn more skills and you know if you sit down and don't do anything, you could sort of go unnoticed and carry on doing your day to day job. (High Potential Employee 2)

From the comment above it appears that women face a discriminatory risk of being excluded from the talent management initiative in a male dominated environment (automobile). This suggests that with the organisation operating an exclusive TM strategy that focuses developmental activities on a small proportion of its employees, women are even more excluded from an already exclusive practice. Furthermore, in order to progress their careers or give themselves any chance of getting into senior management positions, female employees will have to push harder to be recognised and maybe possibly drive themselves towards a career path that is uninterrupted with motherhood. This situation is in sharp contrast to male employees who might be more advantageous with respect to career upward mobility.

5.6 SUMMARY

This chapter presents case by case findings using a uniform framework of themes (Yin, 2014) derived from an initial review of the literature on talent management, the interview guide as well as the research aims and objectives of the study. Empirical findings indicate that three case study organisations (Careco, Parcelco and Techco) implemented an exclusive (elitist) talent management strategy which involves identifying, developing and retaining a small percentage of the organisations' workforce which can significantly contribute to organisational performance while one case organisation (Hotelco) adopted an inclusive approach which considers that every employee is unique and possesses strength that can add value to the organisation. Evidence suggests that staff development, growth and expansion of businesses, retention and competition for best talent are some of the key reasons for embarking on TM programmes.

In the implementation, operationalization and maintenance of TM initiatives, evidence reveals that organisations were faced with challenges that sometimes make talent management a difficult experience and these include time constraints in the development of employees' skills and competence on the part of managers due to increased workload and business demands. Employees' willingness to progress was seen to be a big challenge at Hotelco while the lack of proper communication of the talent scheme to the managers was evident in Parcelco. At Careco, a manager's resistance to changes in the development of talented employees was evident and to some degree practically stalled the development and progression of employees undergoing the TM scheme in the unit. Raising the expectations of employees identified into the talent pool and not being able to meet such expectations due to limited resources and development opportunities was a major concern at Techco.

In relation to the responsibility of managing the talent scheme, evidence indicates that there were similarities in three case study organisations (Careco, Parcelco and Techco) where the senior management team are mostly responsible for TM related activities with support from line managers and the HR team. At Hotelco on the other hand, the talent initiative is HR driven, therefore the major responsibility of managing the scheme lies with the HR team and they are supported by Heads of Departments. Although findings reveal that there were similarities across the four case study organisations with respect to their evaluation practices which appear to use Kirkpatrick's model of training evaluation, there were differences in how organisations conceptualised talent and talent management and in how they identify, develop and retain talented employees. This is further discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses and interprets the key findings of this study in the context of literature and empirical evidence. The discussion is centred on six key areas of the research findings including; the concept of talent and talent management, contextualization of TM practices, reasons behind the adoption of TM, the main activities in the talent management process, evaluation of TM initiatives and emerging themes in the operationalization of TM strategy.

6.2 TALENT AND TALENT MANAGEMENT

Diverse approaches and conceptualizations of the concept of talent and talent management exist (Gallardo-Gallardo et al, 2013; Thunissen et al, 2013). The literature reveals that there is no common definition of talent that is applicable to all organisations (Elegbe, 2010) and as noted in chapter two of this thesis, how organisational talent is defined for talent management purposes remains a tricky issue, with no consensus in practice as to what talent means or the attributes of talented individuals. Organisations find greater value in formulating their meaning of what talent is rather than accepting shared or prescribed definitions. Consequently, there will be major differences in how talent is defined in various organisations and across different industries (Tansley et al., 2007). Evidence from the case study organisations revealed that how talent is defined is organisationally specific and highly affected by the type of industry and the nature of its work and according to organisational priorities (CIPD, 2006). Three main conceptualization of talent were identified in this study;

 (a) Inclusive subject approach – everyone is talented

In Hotelco, the approach to talent management is inclusive; the focus of the talent programme is on all employees at every level. This approach is egalitarian in nature and is structured to help employees develop to their full potential at all levels. Every employee is considered unique with something valuable to contribute to the success of the organisation. Talent, therefore, refers to the totality of employees as it is presumed without the staff, the organisation cannot be successful, and that every employee brings something different to the organisation. In this respect, inclusive approaches to the definition of talent to the extent that they exist, are directed at the whole labour force

(Buckingham & Voyburg, 2001; Yost & Chang, 2009). This definition of talent echoes the view of some scholars who see every employee in an organisation as a talent. Although it is acknowledged that some employees may have more talent than others, it is believed that talent management processes should not be limited to the favoured few or the so called organisation elites (Armstrong, 2006).

Evidence indicated the HR team at Hotelco believed that having an inclusive approach presents the organisation with two very important selling points on how it manages its employees. Firstly, the organisation values each employee's ability to contribute to its success and secondly it provides developmental opportunities for all employees as well as opportunities for employees to excel in their areas strength. This view is shared by Groysberg, Nanda and Nohria, (2004) who posit that adopting an inclusive approach to talent guarantees an egalitarian distribution of resources across all employees in an organisation rather than a focus on a small subset of elite performers, this way avoiding a drop in the morale of loyal employees who are not considered 'superstars'. Similarly, this findings reflects the view of Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013), in the understanding of talent as conceived by many scholars that an inclusive definition of talent is mostly found in strength-based approaches to managing talent- the art of identifying where each individual's areas of natural talent lie, and figuring out how to assist each employee in developing the job-specific knowledge and skills to turn those talents into real performance. Furthermore, this broad approach to the understanding of talent answers some of the criticism directed at TM by some scholars (see Pfeffer, 2001; Ford et al, 2010) as being elitist in nature i.e. viewing talent as an elite subset of the organisation's population who are seen as the most significant sources of competitive advantage (Sparrow et al, 2014). Bothner, Podolny and Smith, (2011) noted that in some extreme inclusive practices, there are organisations that allocate all of their resources equally among employees—or even, allocate more resources to low-performing than to high-performing employee groups with the goal of achieving overall 'good' levels of performance and satisfaction.

However, the challenge remains that although this approach does not alienate the wider population of employees, it is difficult not to see TM as a management fad i.e. substituting talent management for HRM which represents a rebranding exercise to add some credibility to the HR status (Iles, 2010). Similarly, Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2015) point out that the main scholarly criticism of the inclusive subject approach to talent is that it makes a differentiation between talent management and strategic human resource management (SHRM) more difficult. Furthermore, if talent refers to the whole of the workforce, managing talent 'simply' implies proper workforce management and

development of all the organisation's people, which is not particularly helpful in specifying how TM is different from SHRM (Garrow & Hirsh, 2008).

(b) Exclusive subject approach - Talent as a selected few

Two case study organisations (Techco and Parcelco) conceptualise talent from an exclusive subject approach i.e. talented people are seen as employees with high performance and high potential. The definition of talent in this respect represents an elite subset of an organisation's population and draws upon workforce differentiation theory (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). This perception echoes the understanding of talents by Tansley et al. (2007, see chapter two) as those employees who can make a significant impact on the organisation's performance through their current contribution or by demonstrating the highest level of potentials in the longer term.

In Techco for example, the focus of the talent initiative is basically on key salaried positions i.e. managers and employees who have supervisory roles within the organisation, and talented employees are described as individuals that show potential to develop outside of their existing role into a higher role within the organisation. Tansley, (2011) observed that viewing talented employees as high potential is very common in large organisations as was the case with Techco, an automobile industry with over 150,000 employees globally and serving customers in more than 150 countries. Talent therefore in this regard as an high-potential employee is associated with individuals with the ability and aspiration to move into a more senior and critical position in the organisation.The definition implies that not everyone is considered a talent and echoes the views of some scholars (see Silzer & Church, 2009; Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012) that only a small percentage of the workforce usually gets identified as having high potential (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2012).

In Parcelco, the focus is on two talent groups namely managerial and graduate talent. Talent is viewed as individuals with great skills who can make a step toward a bigger role, take on more complex roles, exceed performance expectations and have the desire/drive to succeed. This definition of talent resonates with Michaels et al. (2001: xii) who defined talent as "the sum of a person's abilities - his or her intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgment, attitude, character and drive". It also includes an individual's ability to learn and grow. Evidence indicates that the perception of talent at Parcelco requires that in addition to employees having the abilities and drive to move a step or two higher, they must exceed performance expectation in their current job. This approach to the understanding of talent is related to the organisation's classification of employees into A, B, and C performers which will be discussed in the

next section. Talent from this view relates to a minority of employees who have distinguished performance. This view of talent as a high performer resonates with scholars that conceptualise talent as a select group of employees i.e. 'the best of class' that are exceptional in terms of their skill and ability and can have very significant impact on an organisation's performance (Silzer & Dowell 2010; Smart, 2005; Stahl et al, 2007).

(c) Object approach - Talent as characteristics of people

The talent programme in Careco focused mainly on leadership talent with the aim of identifying and developing team leaders and managers. Talented employees are seen as people with valuable skills that can help progress the organisation forward i.e. employees with outstanding abilities and attitudes that can contribute to the growth of the organisation. This definition resonates with the views of Silzer and Dowell (2010:13) who defined talent as, "An individual's skills and abilities (talents) and what the person is capable of doing or contributing to the organisation. Similarly, the definition of talent as characteristics of people echoes Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2015) whose literature analysis (2001-2014) found a strong leaning towards conceiving talent as exceptional characteristics displayed by individual employees.

In this view, talent represents a wide range of aptitudes and abilities which can be natural or developed or as result of nature–nurture interactions. In organisational practice, therefore, the perception of talent as rather natural, rather developed, or a combination of both holds important implications for the application of talent management practices (Meyers et al., 2013). Innate perspectives on talent entail a focus on the selection, assessment, and identification of talent. In an era of increasing talent scarcity, this means aggressively searching, recruiting, and selecting highly sought-after profiles— which is expected to become more and more challenging as scarcities become even more tangible (Cappelli, 2008). Similarly, Silzer and Dowell (2010) noted that conceiving only natural talent dimension drives organisations to concentrate intensely on selection approach to talent since it is expected that there will be little development or learning on the job. This method is also seen as 'just in time' approach to talent (see Cappelli, 2008)

The acquired construct on talent, on the other hand, imply deliberate practice and focus on education, training and learning from experience as tools for talent development (Dries, 2013; McCall, 1998). Adopting this approach leads to bringing in large groups of individuals early in their careers and using an extensive development effort to build their skills over time and sort out those individuals who learn and develop the most (Silzer & Dowell 2010). Research has shown that although this latter perspective seems particularly attractive considering the changing demand–supply dynamics in the labour

market, most organisational decision makers tend to believe that talent is, for the largest part, inborn (e.g., Tsay & Banaji, 2011). Considering the innate versus developed argument in respect to talent, evidence from Careco indicated that talent is construed as a combination of nature and nurtured skills demonstrated by individual employees that can contribute to the success of the organisation.

From the above conceptualization of talent, findings reveal that three out of four cases (Careco, Techco, and Parcelco) adopted an exclusive (elitist) strategy while Hotelco followed a far more inclusive philosophy. These findings support the views of others (see Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Swailes, 2013) who posit that the dominant form of talent management adopted by a majority of organisations is an exclusive approach. This approach focuses on a minority of the workforce (strategically important employees, high performers, and A players) which is consistent with the workforce differentiation model (Huselid et al., 2005). While the exclusive approach is assumed to generate higher return on investment regarding profit and productivity brought about by increases in the achievements and motivation of star employees (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005), the inclusive approach to talent and talent management is believed to lead to a more cordial working environment characterized by openness, trust, and overall employee well-being (Warren, 2006).

6.3 CONTEXTUALISING TALENT MANAGEMENT

Evidence from this study shows four distinct philosophies in the approach to TM. In Hotelco, the inclusive talent management approach has much in common with good HRM practices. The focus of talent management is on the totality of employees in the organisation and is viewed as nurturing, training and developing all employees at all levels. Talent management in Hotelco helps to identify and develop areas of strength and competence in employees at all levels and to assist employees in progressing their careers in the organisation. This practice approach to TM (Sparrow et al., 2014) acknowledges that there is a need for a dedicated set of advanced and sophisticated human resource practices directed at attracting talent to the organisation, identifying and recruiting talent, developing employees, managing talent flows and delivering performance i.e. managing underperformance, stretching and improving the performance of talented employees.

The talent initiative at Hotelco is an HR tool devised for professional development as it is presumed that all employees contribute to the brand's success and ensuring customer satisfaction. Therefore the improvement of employee learning and development across all levels is crucial to the success of the organisation. This perspective on talent

management focuses most importantly on the "collection of typical HRM practices, activities or functions" (Hartmann et al., 2010). Although there is no accord about the exact bundle of differentiating practices that should be involved in this approach to talent management, the assumption behind it is similar to that seen in high-performance work system debates within the HRM literature (Sparrow et al, 2014). In this view, organisations embark on a strategic set of practices that is more than just a string of HR programmes which forms part of a broader system driven by a business strategy and managed as a core business process (Gubman & Green, 2007; Silzer & Dowell, 2010).

Talent management at Careco is viewed from the perspective of succession management. The organisation values having people who have already imbibed its culture and values in senior positions; talent management is seen as a strategic tool used to develop and promote talented employees from within into managerial positions as the organisation grows and expands its services. It has in place a secondment scheme used to develop talented employees into an internal talent pool who are ready to step into senior management position whenever such situations. The talent pool in this organisation represents groupings and clusters of talent and not just positions where human capital investments make a great difference to the strategic success of the organisation and because improvements in capabilities are brought about by investment in the development and retention of talented employees. It is believed that they will have the most significant impact on the growth and competitiveness of the organisation (Sparrow et al, 2014).

This view of TM argues that companies draw their energy from employees, their individual strengths, motivation and interest and sees talent management as succession or human resource planning (Hartmann et al. 2010) that concentrates on the flow of employees within an organisation. Similarly, Byham et al. (2002) noted that a key driver for establishing talent pools in many organisations is the need to improve succession-planning processes by moving away from rigid replacement strategies, towards creating a pipeline for future roles. Also, the focus here is on internal rather than the external labour market and typically starts with the identification and mobilisation of internal talent pools which is driven by practices associated with human capital management. Some of these practices include workforce or human capital analytics which blend techniques such as forecasting and scenario planning to generate estimates of the current and future workforce, often looking at important roles under various business development or scenarios (Sparrow et al., 2014). This perspective on human capital planning sees TM as means through which organisations anticipate and meet their needs for human capital

and the word capital in this context reflects an economic concept which denotes potentially valuable assets (Naphapiet, 2011).

Talent management in Techco revolves around pivotal positions i.e. salaried key positions; talented employees are accordingly identified and developed into a talent pool by the organisation to get them ready to fill identified key positions. Talent management is viewed as a strategic activity that focuses on the development of a pool of high potential and high performing employees to fill pivotal positions within the organisation which have the potential to impact on growth and competitiveness of the business. Huselid et al. (2005) suggested that while there are ethical issues in relation to the classification of employees into top, middle and low performers, e.g. A, B and C, by some HR professionals, there might not be the same emotional reactivity to classifying positions or segmenting jobs within the organisation.

This perspective emphasises the identification of key positions that have the potential to have an impact on the competitive advantage of an organisation and argues that talent management should begin with the identification of pivotal/key positions rather than of talented employees per se. Talented employees are subsequently identified and developed to fill the previously identified pivotal talent positions (Hartmann et al., 2010). In the same vein, Collings and Mellahi (2009) argued that strategic talent management must involve activities and processes that include the systematic identification of pivotal positions that differentially contribute to the organisation's sustainable competitive advantage. This must be accompanied by the development of a talent pool of high-potential and high-performance incumbents to fill these roles. There must also be an HR architecture that facilitates the filling of these positions with competent incumbents and differentiates their management to ensure their continued commitment to the organisation. For Sparrow et al. (2014) striving to have 'A' players throughout an organisation's operation is not necessary but 'A positions' are. 'A' positions they suggested, should be 'more enriched and give substantial job autonomy to the employees in these positions. By building an element of intrinsic reward into these positions for those who seek job enrichment at their workplace, the talent-management strategy can be less reliant on monetary rewards, making the strategy more acceptable to the wider organisation' (p.54).

In Parcelco, talent management indicates the classification of employees into high, middle and low performers. Amidst the high performers are two groups of employees namely; Exceeded - The employee's performance is superior and having a significant impact on the department and/or organisation. High-performance standards are

consistently achieved by the individual and (b) Achieved Plus - The individual regularly surpasses performance objectives and delivers results. High-performance standards are maintained. Medium performers are employees who are consistently meeting performance standards and are able to deliver the anticipated results. Expected performance standards are maintained by the employee. Low performers are further divided into two namely; (a) achieved minus - the individual accomplishes some of the performance objectives but fails to meet others, and in addition does not constantly meet the necessary standards and (b) 'Did not achieve'- the individual frequently falls short of meeting the performance objectives with little or no progress visible

This perspective on talent management views talented employees as valuable goods ('high potentials') which need to be sought after, irrespective of the specific needs of an organisation. This approach typically classifies individuals into top, middle and low performers (i.e. A, B and C performers) and implies that developmental activities should concentrate solely on top performers (Hartmann et al., 2010). Sparrow et al. (2014) argued that this philosophy focuses on the people rather than the practices aspects of talent management which suggest that TM is really about the management of top elites, a substantial, but small, handful of key people (employees) with unique skill sets- skills that are rare and much sought after by competing organisations. These talented individuals are hard to find and therefore difficult to replace. They add a disproportionate amount of value to the organisation compared to other employees. From a people perspective, a talent-management strategy starts with identifying these individual "star" performers, who are deemed a source of competitive advantage. The philosophy then advocates differentiating the management of these high-performance and high-potential employees. The classification of talent into high, middle and low performers has been suggested by some writers, but the most famous- perhaps now infamous- exposition of the position was the book titled 'The War for Talent' (Michaels et al., 2001).

A summary of discussion is presented below in Table 6.1

Table 6.1 Summary of discussion

Case study organisation	Underlying talent philosophy	Focus of evaluation	Primary development methods	Transparency	Key issues arising
HotelCo	Good HRM	Participant reactions, learning & behaviour	In-house courses (formal and informal)	Totally transparent. TM scheme openly communicated	Fast-tracking talent leading to insufficient job experience
CareCo	Succession planning	Participant reactions, learning & behaviour	Six months secondment placement and shadowing	High level of transparency. Good communication of TM processes.	Managing participants' expectations, favouritism concerns.
TechCo	Key positions	Participant reactions, learning & behaviour	Internal leadership institute providing Ready Now and Ready Next scheme.	Very secretive talent scheme. Non-disclosure of TM processes.	Gender biased TM practices
ParcelCo	Employee ranking	Participant reactions, learning & behaviour	18-month leadership programme, job-based developmental experience (graduate scheme)	Some degree of secrecy in the leadership scheme. Poor communication of TM processes.	Discontent and concerns about exclusive talent management.

6.4 REASONS FOR THE ADOPTION OF TM PRACTICES

Utilising human capital theory (HCT) in the understanding of TM involves seeing talent regarding capital and subsequently costs associated with the attraction, development and retention of talent can be seen as investments in the human capital of the organisation (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). Lepak and Snell (1999 see section 2.9 of chapter 2), observed that rather than referring to talent as 'people' or 'employees,' the RBV framework tends to adopt the distinct vantage point of equating talent to 'human capital' that is both highly valuable and unique. High-value human capital in this instance refers to assets that are pivotal to the organisation's core business and uniqueness refers to the extent to which the organisation's human capital would be difficult to replace (high uniqueness) as opposed to being readily available in the labour market and easily copied by competitors (low uniqueness) (De Vos & Dries, 2013). This research utilises HCT as a framework for understanding TM because it can be linked to one of the key reasons for the adoption of TM practices by case study organisations i.e. the training and development of employees who can make a valuable contribution to the success of the organisation.

In both the inclusive and exclusive approaches to TM identified in all four case study organisations, evidence indicates employees are considered as assets and a source of competitive advantage. Hence for these organisations to remain competitive and successful in the highly competitive business climate they operate in, there is much emphasis on investing in people through training and development as well as investment in the attraction and retention of talented employees. Although originally, the concept of HCT was advanced to explain the levels of investments people make to improve themselves through training and education in order to improve their productivity and earning potentials (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1971), the underlying conviction of HCT is that education creates assets in the form of knowledge and skills, which build the efficiency of educated and highly skilled workers (Becker, 1993).

Techco has a ten-year growth plan strategy in place to remain successful and competitive in the global market. It is believed that one of the key ways of achieving this goal and for the organisation to maintain its current technology edge in the automobile industry is by investing mainly in people, maintaining and growing competence and skills amongst its employees through continuous training and development. Talent management is therefore seen as a means of investing in the organisation's human capital for it to remain competitive in over 150 countries where it serves its numerous customers. Careco as a growing and rapidly expanding organisation sees TM as a

means of developing talented employees' capabilities within the organisation. The organisation realises the need for it to develop its human capital and grow talent from within to sustain its growth and remain profitable in the care service industry. Previous experiences of hiring managers externally were deemed to have hindered the ability of the organisation to sustain its expansion and provision of new services in the UK, hence the heavy investment in the identification, training and development of talented employees into managerial positions who already share the values and culture of the organisation.

For Parcelco, operating in an industry where the organisation's market share is constantly changing, they have come to terms with the fact that for the organisation to remain competitive and increase market share, there is a need to invest in talented employees who are innovative and who can develop new products and services. Through its innovative products, evidence indicates the organisation was able to expand its services and increase its profit margin in the market. Therefore the organisation sees TM as a means of building on and developing the skills and competence of its unique high-value human capital. Unlike the above case study organisations (Techco, Careco and Parcelco) that focuses a large proportion of training and development efforts on a few selected employees, Hotelco as an organisation operating in the hospitality industry believes that all of its human resources (capital) can contribute to its success and competitiveness by providing excellent customer services, hence the adoption of an undifferentiated approach in the provision of training and development opportunities for all employees across all levels. With so much competition in this sector, it is believed that continuous investment in employees' professional development will produce customer satisfaction and a positive contribution to the brand's success of the organisation.

The adoption of new management design and practices has become a valuable and considerable area of study and debate within organisational studies (Sturdy, 2004:156). Although evidence from case study organisations suggests that the adoption of TM practices is predicated on a rational account i.e. adoption based on the presumed economic benefit TM brings to the organisation and its employees, further evidence in three out of the four case study organisations (Techco, Parcelco, and Careco) indicated that in addition to the investment in the development and retention of their human capital, institutional factors also plays a vital role in the adoption of TM practices across these organisations.

At Techco and Careco for example, normative pressure appeared to influence the adoption of TM practices. The TM initiative at Techco is supported by a top management

consulting firm working for the organisation. Although the TM strategy is seen as a key factor in the level of employee development and retention, the pressure exerted on the organisation by such an influential management consulting firm played an important part in the design and implementation of the TM programme. While at Careco, normative pressure was evident in the adoption of the TM strategy by the organisation in that the talent scheme programme in use was developed and introduced by the Director of Operations from her experience and network in a professional association and her position in the organisation appears to influence the adoption as well as the operationalization of the talent scheme.

Normative pressure in this regard is connected to the relationships between management policies and background of rational actors regarding their networks of professional associations, job experience, and educational levels (Paauwe & Boselie 2003). It is also believed that the norms and values that professionals develop through professional networks and formal education increase the similarity of the skills and knowledge of the total workforce in a given organisational field (Boon et al., 2009). This view of normative isomorphism therefore as a process of homogenization in the adoption of management practices amongst organisations is made possible by agents' adoption of behaviours because they are deemed superior by influential individuals in the organisations or by professional organisations depended upon by the adopting organisation (Hofer et al., 2011).

In the case of Parcelco, the increasing popularity of TM amongst organisations providing similar products and services in the transport and logistics industry appears to influence the adoption of talent management practices and evidence indicates that mimetic pressure had a significant impact in the restructuring of the talent management programme undertaken. To remain competitive, maintain its market share and stop talented employees from going to a rival firm, the Learning and Development Manager introduced a standardised form of talent identification and development metrics from his previous organisation in a similar industry which was presumed to have a more desirable outcome in attracting, developing and retaining talented employees as compared to his current organisation. This finding reflects the view of Sidani and Al Ariss (2014 see chapter two) who argued that for organisations operating in the same industry, mimetic isomorphism will drive organisations to look at the best TM practices and attempt to implement them especially from firms which are perceived to be successful and legitimate.

6.5 KEY FEATURES OF TM ACTIVITIES IN CASE STUDY ORGANISATIONS

The identification, development and retention of talented employees were key features of the talent management processes observed in case study organisations. These findings lend support to the views of many scholars (see Beevers & Rea, 2013; Hatum, 2010; Meyer & Woerkom, 2014; Sizler & Dowell, 2010) who argue that talent management in the extant literature as well as in management practice is largely concerned with the strategic identification, development and retention of talented employees that are valued and seen as a source of competitive advantage.

Findings also reveal variations in the talent management processes from one organisation to the other. For example, in identifying talent, Careco used supervision records and line managers' judgement. Line managers play the role of identifying talent through regular supervisions, performance appraisal and observation on the shop floor and subsequently recommending employees to HR department for the talent scheme. This corresponds with the findings of Yarnall, (2011:516) that 'most organisations identify their talent and future potential by line managers making judgements.' In the case of Techco, talented employees are identified through the use of the nine box grid and strategic talent review (STR) process. The nine-box grid assesses the employee's potential and performance while the STR takes into consideration their learning and development, performance appraisal and behaviour in the organisation. Employees who come out top are believed to have certain potentials or are distinguished and are then seen as talent ready to be developed. At Parcelco, the Ability, Aspiration, and Engagement (AAE) assessment tool and 360-degree feedback are used to identify managerial talent while for the graduate talent scheme, the use of open day, interviews, and an assessment centre are employed. Senior managers play a vital role in identifying managerial talent, for example, the leadership talent programme for managers; the line managers have to support in writing employees applying for this programme after conducting an initial assessment of the employee performance and potential.

These variations identified in the case study organisations reflect the views of scholars (see McDonnell, 2011; Silzer & Dowell, 2010; Tansley et al., 2007) who observed that organisations adopt different approaches and tools such as the use of a competency performance management, HR planning, 360-degree feedback and strategic talent reviews in identifying talented employees. At Hotelco, it is believed that every employee in the organisation has something to contribute to the success of the organisation and meeting customer satisfaction hence, every employee is considered a talent. The focus

here is to nurture areas of strength in individual employees and to ensure the organisation can maximise the strengths of employees to the benefit of the organisation.

In relation to the development of talent, evidence indicates that case study organisations adopted a combination of the four primary classes of talent development programmes identified by Garavan et al. (2012) (i.e. formal programmes, relationship-based developmental experience, job-based developmental experience, and non-formal developmental activities – see chapter two). Although three case study organisations (Careco, Parelco, and Techco) used both internal and external means of developing employees, there were variations in the way each organisation went about it. In Parcelco, managerial talents embark on an 18-month leadership course with a partner university while the graduate scheme involves participants undergoing a 15 months internal programme with different departments within the organisation. Also, Parcelco runs some in-house courses on leadership management and team leading.

Techco operates an internal leadership institute where identified talents go through two talent development initiatives namely; Ready Now (12 months programme used to develop talents for immediate higher roles) and Ready Next (focuses on developing talents for a future role in a 2-3 year plan). Other methods of developing identified talent are mentoring, coaching, secondments and stretchy assignments. Careco utilises mentoring, secondments and shadowing for developing identified talents within the organisation. For example, there is a deputy manager secondment programme being run at two centres (services) for six months. Other methods of developing include the use of an external employee development programme paid for by the organisation. Hotelco, on the other hand, used mainly internal means of developing employee competency and career progression, but this includes developing employees at different locations and countries in which Hotelco operates. Programmes include; itineraires- three level stage qualification for acquiring new competencies, Improving and consolidating knowledge; Service Attitudes- designed for all employees across the organisation; Globetrotter - professional development programme, designed for those who wish to become a Head of Department; GM Pass- 12 months programme designed for Heads of Department who wish to progress to the next stage in their career.

In respect to talent retention, all four organisations emphasise the importance of retention because losing key employees invariably incurs costs (Festing & Schafer, 2014). The retention strategies adopted shows various practices across case study organisations. Techco operates a retention policy that looks at annual recognition through achievement, merit recognition, salary adjustment. It also looks at providing

opportunities for career progression as well as development opportunities which the HR specialist acknowledged resulted in low staff turnover. At Careco, in addition to the training and career development opportunities, employees across the board are offered optical and dental medical insurance, financial incentives and a long service wage scheme for employees employed for more than 18 months.

Parcelco offers benefits and very competitive pay as a means of retaining employees. Although the retention policies show positive signs of talent retention and low of turnover, concerns were expressed that low turnover can hinder the flow of fresh ideas into the organisation. At Hotelco, employee training and development, and career advancement opportunity play a significant role in employee retention. The organisation brand (an organisation where everyone is given the opportunity to progress quickly and go further) appears to have a positive impact on employee retention. Hotelco believes its success is due to the professionalism and enthusiasm of its employees. From the above, all four case study organisations emphasised training and development as well as career progression as a key strategy for retaining talented employees to meet their respective business objectives and to remain competitive.

Although case study organisations recognise the importance of employee development to the success of their business, it was noted that the three organisations that adopted the exclusive approach to talent management (Careco, Parcelco and Techco) also include pay and benefits as a strategy to retaining key employees. This reflects a CIPD survey report (2015) that organisations are stepping up their retention strategy notably in the private sector, specifically through improving employee pay and benefits especially with the increasingly global nature of business and more competitors entering the fray and stretching an already restricted talent pool. In other words, the stronger the labour market, the all the more difficult it is for companies to keep hold of their talented employees, hence the need for organisations to go beyond just providing development and career progression opportunities for talented employees (CIPD, 2015).

All four organisations try to promote a brand that the organisation is a desirable place to work. For example, Parcelco prides itself as an employer of choice where there is an investment in the learning and development of its employees through award-winning programmes aligned to business and personal needs of the employees. Careco asserts the people working for the organisation are the company's most important asset and that staff members within the organisation are provided with significant training and development opportunities, career progression and also that the organisation has a keen desire to promote people from within through the organisation's unique staff development

programme. Hotelco promotes the concept that every employee at every level is valuable and uniquely contributes to the competitiveness of the organisation. It is believed that the totality of its workforce, not an elite minority creates added value for the organisation's brand. Therefore, it offers professional development and career progression opportunities to all employees across the board. Techco acknowledges that the success of the organisation is enabled by the commitment and dedication of employees around the world. With continued growth focus, the organisation presents itself as a company where employees can express ideas, make a difference and build their future.

6.6 EVALUATION OF TM PRACTICES

A key focus of this research was to examine how talent management initiatives undertaken by organisations were evaluated and to explore what impact TM programmes have on organisations and employees. In evaluating the secondment leadership scheme, Careco assesses participants through what is known as daily shop floor observation as they carry out their assigned tasks and monthly supervision by their immediate line manager where they are assessed on their progress in the scheme. In addition, learning and job behaviour is assessed every two months by the Director of Operations and HR on what skills the participants have learnt or the improvement in knowledge they have gained and how they have been able to apply this learning or improvement into their daily work life as well as participants' ability to meet and achieve set goals. Participants are given feedback on their performance (both negative and positive) and areas of future development. The organisation also receives feedback from participants' experience on the programme intermittently in respect to their learning and development; concerns and difficulties encountered in the programme as well as areas of training that are needed but not provided by the organisation. Since the inception of the talent initiative, 15 deputies and managers have been promoted from within the organisation rather than hiring externally; this is taken as a success story for the organisation.

Parcelco assesses its graduate talent scheme participants' learning and development at the end of every placement through a feedback template which is completed by the line manager and other employees involved in any project undertaken by the graduate trainee. This is then reviewed by talent and resourcing manager and the HR through appraisal meeting with the participants to establish their progress in the scheme (measure progress towards learning of specialised skills and competence). The participants are given the opportunity to make a presentation at the end of their placement on what they have learnt (achieved) and how they have been able to apply

this in projects undertaken during their placements and to showcase where they have exceeded performance expectation through their input and discretion i.e. where their ideas and input has generated improved performance to the department/organisation. Participants are given feedback on their progression in the scheme (including areas of improvements, areas participants have achieved sets goals and where they have exceeded expectations).

For the leadership readiness programme, participants are assessed in three core areas of the business (operations, finance, and commercial) by the partner university at the end of each module which they must attain minimum pass mark to complete the course. At work, they are given set objectives on a quarterly basis on their learning and development and subsequently assessed by their line manager to establish their progress and how well they have applied acquired skills or competence in their immediate job role or any task they are assigned to such as a work based project they have undertaken in relation to the new skills they have acquired and how this has translated into their job behaviour. They are given feedback on their performance in relation to the set goals and objectives of their training and development during review meetings with the talent and resourcing manager and the HR team. Participants are also giving the opportunity to respond to the feedback as well as raise any area of concerns in relation to their development and how they feel about their development in the programme.

Techco evaluates aspects of its leadership development programme by assessing participants' learning and development through a formal skill metrics tool which is aimed at examining the progress of the participants in relation to what learning has been generated through the training provided and how it has been applied to the participant's assigned task, projects or specific job role in the organisation. The participant's acquired skills and competencies are assessed quarterly by the line manager and HR team to track the achievements they have made after successfully undergoing the leadership development programme. The skill metrics also establish areas of a participant's strength and weaknesses and areas of further or subsequent development that might be required. For example, in instances where the training has not got participants to the level required within the allocated time frame, the organisation provides further training, coaching and mentoring to speed up development. In addition to the quarterly appraisal, participants go through an annual strategic review meeting to establish what progress they have achieved with respect to their goals and performance expectations. Furthermore, during the leadership training programme as well as at completion, participants are given the opportunity to give feedback from their position on the training they have undertaken

which includes how well the training initiatives have been received and how they perceive the value or benefits of the programme.

In Hotelco, assessing employee learning and development remains a key priority in the inclusive TM scheme, since it is believed that the success of the organisation and its ability to thrive in the competitive hospitality industry hinges on the level of professional services provided by all employees to its numerous customers. In the Graduate, Bachelor and Master level development programmes, for example, participants' knowledge and newly acquired competencies are assessed through direct observation on the job, and competency assessment carried out by their immediate line managers and this is logged into what is known as a passport (portfolio) that entails employee developmental progress with the organisation. Employees are signed off to have passed and given a badge which is attached to their lapel only if they can demonstrate that they have been able to transfer acquired skills and competencies in their respect job roles. Employees are given feedback on their performance, and for those who are unable to reach the level of performance expectations the organisation provides further training in areas of identified weaknesses as well as providing additional support through coaching.

Employees who go on to the management development programme are assessed on specific modules that represent the core areas of the business (sales, people management, operation, teamwork). To complete the programme, participants are expected to pass every course module and undertake new projects where they are also expected to apply their newly acquired competence and skills i.e. assessment of participants is based on course modules and assigned projects). At the end of the programme, participants' attend a review meeting with the programme facilitators and their assigned tutors where a feedback is given on their progress in terms of areas that they have succeeded in and areas that needed to be improved upon as well as what is possibly in line for successful participants in respect to their future roles within the organisation.

From the above four case study scenarios, the first level of evaluation identified measured participant reactions to the training and development activities they have experienced. Primarily, data were collected after the event via 'happy sheets.' Evaluation at this level is typically on how well the learning or training initiatives is received by the participants (Beever & Rea, 2013). Did learners find it useful? Did they enjoy it? Did they recognise it to be of value? While not unimportant, this level of evaluation offers some useful insights into the early experiences of participants, but because it is concerned with first reactions and feelings, the results need to be considered with some caution.

Feelings are quite difficult to measure and by definition lack objectivity and there is little correlation between how trainees feel about the programme and what they have learned (Birnbrauer, 1987). Nonetheless, Kirkpatrick's level 1 suggests that reaction to a training programme is quite important in that positive or negative reaction from participants can have a considerable impact on the programme and how it is delivered.

Learning (level 2) is another vital aspect of evaluation undertaken by the four organisations studied. Evaluation here measured how well participants have learned as a result of the training and learning interventions and case study organisations did try to establish participants' progress towards learning specified skill and competence. Recognising that the purpose of training and development is to create new job capabilities means that evaluation must be expanded to the working environment (Megginson et al., 1999) and although learning may have taken place, there is no assurance that new learning (skills) will be applied and result in change behaviour (Beevers & Rea, 2013). Evidence from research shows that these organisations assesses a participant's work behaviour (level 3) to ascertain if the training/learning has had an impact on the participant's behaviour at work.

Kirkpatrick's level 4 is the most business-focused as it evaluates the extent to which a training intervention has had a clear and positive impact on the overall organisational success (Gold et al., 2010). Findings indicate that the results of the impact of talent management initiatives were not measured in the case organisations. This reflects the views of many scholars (see Alliger & Janak, 1989; Kraiger, Fords & Salas, 1993; Phillips, 2003) that although Kirkpatrick's model is praised for its simplicity and its ability to help organisations in understanding the concepts of training evaluation, it has not been fully implemented in its entirety i.e. levels 1-4 evaluation of the model. Others (see Bomberger, 2003; Bromley & Kitson, 1994; Paradise & Patel, 2009) even suggested that despite the model being prevalent and highly influential in evaluating training programmes, many organisations stall at level 1 (reaction) and level 2 (learning). Evidence from this study indicates that all four case study organisation carried out evaluation at levels 1(reaction), 2 (learning) and 3 (job behaviour) of the Kirkpatrick's model of training evaluation. These findings support the views of Yarnall (2011) in the analysis of case study research on talent pools that there was a notable lack of research focused on measuring the impact or success of instigating talent pools by organisations. Therefore the true value of adopting TM practices remains a critical question requiring further analysis. Despite the lack of level four evaluations (results), factors such as managers having better skills, higher engagement, retention, and employees getting

promoted into managerial roles from within the organisation were seen as positive indicators that talent management programmes are working.

6.7 EMERGENT ISSUES IN THE CASE STUDY ORGANISATIONS

In addition to the main findings given above, some emerging issues were identified in relation to the operationalization of talent management namely; transparency of the talent management process, managing the expectations of employees in the talent schemes, issues relating to diversity, allowing employees to develop at their pace as well as issues relating to direct line managers having the sole responsibility of identifying talent.

In respect to transparency of the talent management processes, organisational responses vary from being totally transparent to non-disclosure notably about who is on the talent list. For instance, while ParcelCo, CareCo and HotelCo, appear to inform employees who are classified as talent through their performance management feedback systems, Techco did not communicate the results of the annual strategic talent review to its employees and in addition evidence indicates that employees excluded from the TM processes had little or knowledge of the talent initiative undertaken by their organisation. Silzer and Dowell (2010:760) contend that 'organisations vary on how much information they shared about specific aspects of talent management system. How are people selected for various programmes? What information and decisions about an individual get shared with the person? Although historically, most organisations have kept this information confidential and tightly controlled, in the past decade, there has been more organisational openness to sharing some information. However, how much gets shared with individuals is still a controversial issue.'

At Parcelco, some degree of secrecy and lack of communication was evident in the leadership development programme which resulted in uneasiness amongst managers who were excluded from the scheme. Furthermore, because of the lack of communication of the programme at Techco especially to the remainder of the workforce, evidence suggests that employees outside the talent pool felt discontent and disappointed at the lack of training and development opportunities in the organisation. The effect of TM initiatives on non-participating employees varies and appears to be dependent on how the message is communicated to the remainder of the workforce. If this is done badly, the non-participating population are more likely to feel devalued and de-motivated as well as having concerns about the training and development opportunities available to them within the organisation. Consequently, this may lead to situations where there are lower employee performances and increased rate of turnover,

thereby bringing about unintended costs of further recruitment (Yarnall, 2011). Also, because only certain population within the senior management were given the opportunity to go onto the programme as against all senior managers, some senior managers who were not selected to be part of the programme were unhappy about being excluded from the leadership development initiative.

Managing the expectations of employees in the talent scheme appears to be another challenge for management and employees. For example, in CareCo, an employee in the talent programme was concerned he could be demotivated after the secondment scheme if he is not promoted. In Techco, senior managers were concerned about raising the expectations of individuals identified as talent and not meeting their expectations and thus having an adverse effect on their performance. According to Collings and Mellahi (2009:4), 'those employees who are likely to compose the talent pool are high achievers and may easily become disillusioned if they are appointed to roles with limited scope for the application of their skills or development of their talent.' Yarnall (2011) argues that when employees are identified as high potentials and placed in a talent pool, there is the possibility that this select group of employees will have a higher expectation of the kind of experiences and opportunities open to them. The challenge in this scenario for many organisations will always be the availability of opportunities to go with this raised expectation or planned progression for high potential employees which may not be deliverable in the present work setting.

Moreover, most certainly, not all organisations have a supply of opportunities at their disposal and these results in fewer developmental jobs being available (Corporate Leadership Council, 2003). So for the high potential employee at Careco, not being able to get into a management position for which the secondment programme is intended represents a setback because of the lack of opportunities to use acquired skills and competence and this could lead to a situation where the employee's commitment and motivation diminish over time.

In addition, evidence from this study also indicates that the weight of expectation from the management in relation to increase performance and commitment on the part of employees in the talent pool can be very challenging especially when they are pressured into putting in more time at work in order to meet certain goals and performance expectations which can be stressful as well as affect employee's work-life balance. This finding reflects the view of Yarnall (2011:520) that "many companies recognise the pressures that are being put on members of their talent pools. High expectations were being set for individuals regarding their commitment to and progress of their personal

development plans, and these plans often had activities peripheral and additional to the person's core role". These other responsibilities sometimes impact on the ability of the employees in the talent pool to achieve a work-life balance without being penalised. To some degree, the view from the organisation's perspective is that if an individual wants to progress their career, he/she should be willing to cope with the challenges it brings as well as put in extra effort and drive to succeed without necessarily considering how this impacts on the employee's work-life balance. This approach could derail talented employees in the pool and more importantly prevent other high potential employees from participating in the talent scheme if they feel being part of the pool will lead to them sacrificing their home life for future career progression (Yarnall 2011).

Allowing employees to develop at their pace was a major concern for a senior manager in Hotelco. Although the organisation has reward systems in place to encourage fast employee progression, allowing employees to develop at their pace was deemed most beneficial to all. Evidence from this case study highlights a significant challenge organisations are faced with when fast-tracking employees into the talent pool. For example, an employee whose development was fast-tracked and promoted into a more senior position because of his potential found the new role quite challenging and stressful and could not meet up with the performance expectation on the new role. This finding suggests that when employees are developed too quickly, they may not have sufficient experience to grow into higher responsible positions. This view is shared by Schuler (2007) that while an individual may be successful in one role; this will not necessarily translate into success in a higher position. Yarnall (2011) suggested that if high potential employees are developed and moved too fast, it may not be workable for them to pick up from their failures and successes and secure a longer-term or broadened mind-set. Similarly, Bunker, Kram and Ting (2002) noted that developing and promoting talented employees too fast can be risky for organisations. For example putting these high-potential employees into managerial positions too rapidly denies them of the chance to build up the emotional competencies that accompany time and experience — capabilities like the capacity to negotiate with peers, manage their feelings in times of emergency, or win support for change.

Giving line managers the sole responsibility for identifying talented employees was an issue in Careco. An employee outside the talent secondment programme appealed for fairness in the selection process because of the risk of bias due to talent being identified principally by line managers as the nomination process may be unintentionally biased. Senior managers in this organisation acknowledged that the approach to talent identification is dependent on line manager assessment and recommendation and this

finding reflects the view of Hirsh (2000) that most organisations identify their talent and future potential by line managers making judgments. Furthermore, in situations where there is subjective talent decision making such as relying so much on the insights and the views of an individual in talent identification process for example, even if that person is the CEO, can be counterproductive with issues relating to favouritism and unintentional biases emerging which could be harmful to talent management efforts by the organisation (Silzer & Dowell, 2010).

Gender diversity was another emergent theme. In Techco for instance, 'think talent, think men' (Festing et al., 2014) appears to be the talent mindset operating within a male-dominated culture, and female employees seemed to be intentionally excluded from talent management initiatives. This finding lends support to the work of Yarnall (2011:12) on 'maximising the effectiveness of talent pools' that numerous organisations expressed concern at the lack of diversity within their talent pool and that practically only very few had processes to ensure that the composition of their talent pool was equitable. Her study indicated that in the longer term, challenges could arise in many organisations because of the inability to incorporate diversity into their pools. Similarly, Festing et al. (2014) in an investigation of gender inclusion in talent management reveal that women are often disadvantaged when it comes to the prevailing practices relating to managing talented employees, and by implication, this inhibits career progression and the retention of female talent. Female employees who eventually make it to senior positions at Techco put in a lot more effort and investment in themselves and force their way through compared to male employees who are given priority in respect to training and development opportunities as well as career progression.

6.8 SUMMARY

This chapter has highlighted the conceptualisation and operationalisation of talent management practices within case study organisations in the context of literature and empirical findings. Although there was a lack of consensus on the definition of talent and talent management, evidence indicates that each organisation had a clear understanding of what talent is or who is classed a talent, hence the different approaches to managing talented employees. Two main views of talent management are established in this thesis; TM as an integral part of a general HRM strategy focused on the totality of the workforce (Sizler & Dowell) and TM as a strategic activity focused on small percentage of an organisation's workforce which is less egalitarian and more elitist in practice (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). This chapter discusses pivotal positions, employee classification,

succession planning and good HRM as the underlying talent philosophies driving TM practices in the case study organisations.

Although findings reveal that the identification, development and retention of employees remain the key feature of talent management practices, there were differences in the way each organisation went about these activities. In identifying talent, for example, organisations embark on different approaches such as the use of the Ability, Aspiration, and Engagement (AAE) assessment tool, 360-degree feedback, supervision records and line managers' judgement, a performance and potential matrix, and strategic talent review (STR) processes. For case organisations, talent development signifies an important part of the overall talent management strategy (Cappelli, 2009) and there were variations in the methods adopted which comprises mainly of a combination of formal and non-formal developmental activities, job-based developmental experience and relationship-based developmental experience (Garavan et al., 2012).

Retention of talented employees remains a strategic priority for organisations as failure to do so could have unfavourable implications such as losing highly valued staff to a competitor and additional expenses sparked by the loss of talent (Bhattacharyya, 2015: Lawler, 2005). Retention practices adopted by organisations including training and career progression opportunities, very competitive pay, optical and dental medical insurance, merit and annual recognition were identified.

The transparency of TM practices varies from one organisation to another. While the talent management process was totally transparent and openly communicated in the organisation operating an inclusive approach to TM, case study organisations adopting the exclusive (elitist) approach appeared less transparent and in some cases, the processes were poorly communicated to employees especially in relation to employees being identified as talented. Furthermore, evaluation activities shared similarities across cases which focused mainly on the participant's reactions, learning, and the transfer of knowledge to the work environment. The next chapter presents the conclusions of this thesis as well as contributions and areas for future research.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This final chapter summarises the findings of this research and presents contributions to the talent management field. It begins by revisiting the research aim and objectives (section 7.2) as outlined in Chapter 1. In section 7.3, the research contribution to TM is explained, and in section 7.4, this chapter concludes with research limitations and direction for future research.

7.2 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this project was to explore talent management and its evaluation in private sector organisations. The following research objectives were identified and employed in achieving the aim of the study:

1. To examine why organisations adopt TM programmes.

2. To establish how Talent and TM are conceptualised in case study organisations.

3. To explore employees perspective and experiences of TM programmes

4. To examine how talent management programmes undertaken by organisations are evaluated and subsequently develop a programme evaluation model.

To examine why organisations adopt TM programmes.

Findings reveal that the case study organisations see their employees as valuable assets and a unique source of competitive advantage in a fast and changing business environment where there is an increase in the mobility of labour, a faster rate of innovation and enhanced competitive capability of organisations. For these organisations to thrive and sustain their competitiveness, it is believed that building on and investing in the capabilities of their human capital (assets) can bring about organisational growth and enhance their profitability compared to rival firms. This view, therefore, equates talent to human capital (Lepak & Snell, 1999; Tarique & Schuler, 2010). As observed by De Vos and Dries (2013, see chapter 2), high-value human capital represents assets that are central to the organisation's uniqueness and success because the skills and knowledge employees acquire through training and development translate to a form of capital. When these resources are effectively put into use, it becomes profitable for both the

organisations and individuals (Schultz 1961; Shultz 1971).Evidence indicates that human capital thinking played a key role in the adoption of TM practices in case study organisations.

Findings also revealed that institutional isomorphism influenced the adoption of talent management initiatives in addition to the rationale for attracting, developing and retaining human capital for organisational success. Rationalising pressure in the form of normative isomorphism from a management consulting firm influenced the incorporation of elements of perceived socially constructed beliefs in relation to exclusive talent management at Techco (manufacturing). Normative pressure in the homogenization of TM practices was evident in Careco (healthcare) where the Director of Operations appears to influence the nature and direction of TM initiatives from her experience and network in a professional association. In Parcelco (logistics), for the organisation to remain competitive in the industry it operates in, a specific TM practice was introduced which was assumed to be more effective in other organisations providing similar products and services. This led to a decoupling and restructuring of previous talent initiative by the organisation.

To establish how Talent and TM are conceptualised in case study organisations.

Empirical evidence indicates that there were variations in how case study organisations viewed talent. Findings revealed that talent is conceptualised in three major ways: (1) talent is seen as a selected few who can make a meaningful impact on the firm's performance through their current commitment or contribution or by demonstrating in the longer term the highest level of potentials (Tansley et al., 2007). (2) Talent as characteristics of people (object approach) i.e. talent viewed as skills and aptitudes individuals possess that can significantly had value or contribute to the success of the organisation and these can be either innate or acquired skills and abilities or a combination of both (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2015; Silzer & Dowell, 2010). (3) Talent as all employees- everyone contributes to the success of an organisation. In other words, organisational success comes from being able to harness the capabilities (skills and abilities) of the whole workforce, not just a few superstars (Peters, 2006; O'Reilly & Pfeffer, 2000). Therefore, it is argued in this thesis that how talent is conceptualised inevitably depends on what industry or market an organisation operates in. For example, while it is possible to adopt an exclusive approach to defining talent in the manufacturing sector where people who work on the shop floor are not seen as frontline employees, this may less be applicable in the service sector such as in the hospitality industry where the whole business model is defined around both frontline and behind-the-scenes

employees who all play an equally significant part in delivering the high-quality service to their numerous clients (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005).

Moreover, on the conceptualization of talent management, findings indicate that organisations operationalize TM from a different viewpoint i.e. the conceptualization of TM vary from one organisation to another but that each variation and its associated philosophy can be encapsulated through a core talent driver. In the healthcare, talent management was essentially driven by succession planning and human resource planning. In hospitality, talent management equated to more general HRM. In manufacturing, talent management revolved around key/pivotal positions where talented employees are identified and developed to fill these positions and lastly the conceptualization of TM was reflected in the classification of employees into top, middle and low performers in the logistics sector. This thesis argues that although it is evident that organisations adopt different philosophies (i.e. competing or alternative approaches) in their talent management strategies, they will benefit more by putting these four approaches into a structure whereby they can treated as complimentary strategies to the management of talented employees which can help organisations consider and position the design of various organisational talent management system and furthermore decide when each ought to end up most dominant rather than viewing the different approaches as alternatives i.e. adopt different approach at different stages or a combination of approaches depending on the prevailing circumstances (Sparrow et al., 2014).

To explore employees perspective and experiences of TM programmes.

Evidence from employees' narratives (i.e. both within and outside talent programmes) provides important perspectives to the understanding of talent management practices in organisations. Findings indicate that there were concerns about the identification and selection processes of employees into the talent pool in three case study organisations (Careco, Parcelco and Techco) implementing the exclusive approach to talent management. At Techco, evidence indicates a practice whereby female employees appeared to be excluded from the talent scheme in a male dominated employment. In addition, finding reveals that an employee outside the talent pool felt disappointed at the lack of development and progression opportunities due to the bulk of the organisation's resources being directed towards a small percentage of employees. On the other hand employees in the talent pool were pleased with the level of developmental opportunities available to them.

Evidence from employees' narrative at Careco suggests that although the talent scheme opportunities are openly communicated to all employees, only those put forward by their

line managers eventually get into the scheme which can bring about unintentional bias and favouritism. Despite the above concern about elements of unfairness in the selection process, findings reveal that employees within and outside the talent pool were satisfied with the learning and development opportunities provided by their organisation. At Parcelco, evidence indicates that there was a lack of communication and some elements of secrecy about the talent scheme and the process used to select managers for the leadership development programme with a partner university and this resulted in some managers being unhappy and uneasy about their exclusion from the TM programme.

At Hotelco where an inclusive talent management practices were evident, employees' experiences indicate a general sense of satisfaction because of the open culture that supports, values and nurtures all employees regardless of what position they occupy or department they belong to. Findings also reveal that in relation to developing employees' competence, there are no preferential or special treatments focusing on a small proportion of the workforce at the expense of others and this, in turn, makes employees' believe they are valued and that their development remains a top priority for the organisation.

To examine how talent management programme undertaken by organisations are evaluated and subsequently develop a programme evaluation model.

Evidence reveals that all four case study organisations engage in some forms of evaluation practices and they appear to use levels one, two and three of Kirkpatrick's model of training evaluation to evaluate their talent management initiatives. The focus of the programme was essentially on measuring the programme's effect on participants' reactions, learning, and job behaviour. Although no measurement was evident in respect to the impact of the talent programmes on the organisation or return on investment, factors such as retention, skill development, higher engagement, and getting promoted into senior/managerial roles from within the organisation were seen as positive indicators that talent management initiatives are working.

Scholars (see Holton, 1996; Phillips, 1997; Swanson & Holton, 2001) suggest that in respect to training interventions, measuring the effects on participants, their work, and the organisation remains the main focus of most organisations. In Figure 7.1, from the findings of this study, a TM programme evaluation model was developed which focuses on five key areas of importance in the operationalization of talent management programmes. The model is complemented by suggested questions for programme evaluation in the identified key areas on Table 7.1 (a) Strategic Importance- Identifying and defining the strategic need for the talent management programme. Clearly

identifying and defining the strategic need for a talent management programme is the basis for all that follows in the development of this evaluation model. At this stage it is imperative to consider what drives the need for the programme, describe the possible causes of the talent challenges confronting the organisation because not recognising these other factors reduces the probability of long - term success of the talent management programme. This should include both internal and external factors and how the talent management initiatives will address some or all of these challenges to achieve the longer - term goal of solving the identified organisational challenges or problems i.e. presenting the business case for talent management.

Figure 7.1 Talent Management Programme Evaluation Model

TM PROGRAMME

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE
Identifying and defining the strategic need for TM

KEY PROGRAMME PROCESSES
Attraction
Identification
Development
Retention

PARTICIPANT
Reaction, Learning
Job behaviour
Employee's expectation
Tracking progress

ORGANIZATION/DEPARTMENT
Contributions (short and long term) in relation to benefits and cost

WIDER PROGRAMME IMPLICATIONS
Ethical issues (Non talented employees, Gender Diversity, Fairness)
Communication & transparency
Using findings to improve programme

Source: Author

(b) Key programme processes: In practice for many organisations, the attraction, identification, development and retention of talented employees makes up the key processes of their TM initiative. For organisations to make a success of their programme, this model suggests that it is important to assess how these processes impact on their ability to retain key employees and remain competitive. (c) Participants: it is assumed that investment in training and development of employees can considerable impact on an organisation performance and success (Sugrue & Rivera, 2005). This model therefore

194

suggest that when measuring the impact of the programme on participants, managing participants' expectation and tracking participants' progress should be taken into consideration in addition to measuring participants' reaction, learning and job behaviour as advocated by the Kirkpatrick's model of training evaluation.

(d) Organisation/Department: Studies (see CIPD, 2007) have identified some of the challenges that organisations face with respect to programme evaluation such as evaluation is time-consuming; the result of training and development cannot be measured. In trying to establish the extent to which successful training and development programme impacts on an organisation's bottom line, or operational performance, this model suggests that it is important to establish the association between talent initiatives and improvements in operational and financial performance. (e) Wider programme implications: For example, where an exclusive approach to TM is adopted (as it is in most organisations), this model suggest that it is important to assess the impact of the wider programme implications on other areas such as diversity of the talent pool, transparency, and communication of the programme processes and the ethicality of the programme in relation to employees who are excluded from the programme.

In evaluating the effectiveness of TM strategies, several questions arise and are set out in Table 7.1

Table 7.1 Suggested questions for TM evaluation

Evaluation	Focus and concerns
Strategic importance: Identifying and defining the strategic need for TM	What drives the need for the programme? What are the possible causes of the talent challenges in the organisation (internal and external factors)? How does this impact the organisation both on a short term and long term basis?
TM processes: Attraction	. -What is the organisational strategy to attract prospective employees? Is the organisation perceived as being 'a great place to work'? Does the organisation provide an employee value proposition (EVP) that is attractive to prospective employees? Is the organisation an 'employer of choice'?
Identification	-How is talent identification bias minimised in the programme? Are the procedures fair and equitable? Is the organisation using multiple methods in the identification process?

Development	- Are developmental opportunities made available to employees in the talent pool? Is the organisation able to create an environment where talented people can develop? Is there clearly a connection between the kinds of skills being developed and the methods adopted? What is the degree of formality?
Retention	- Does the organisation have a long-term retention strategy (i.e. competitive and developmental dimension) to avoid a short-sighted perspective? Does it provide performance-related pay at different levels? What is the strategy for career progression for those in the talent pool? Does compensation offer short and long-term incentives?
Participants: Reaction Learning	-Was the learning experience helpful and useful? Did they enjoy it? -What is the participant's progress towards learning of specified skill and competence? Have the objectives of the TM intervention been met? What have the participants learned?
Job behaviour	-To what extent is learning transferred to the workplace or is manifest in performance? What support is provided for the use of new skills and competencies?
Expectation	-How are the raised expectations of employees managed in the programme? Has the organisation thought through the opportunities on offer and made clear what will and will not be available to them?
Tracking Progress	-How do participants grow into taking more senior management positions are they stagnant and de-railed overtime? Are they living up to their potentials? How are they supported in their new roles?
Organisation	How does the organisation establish the vital association between training and improvements in operational and financial performance? What were the cost and benefits of the talent initiatives? What are the overall tangible and intangible contributions of the programme? Is the organisation better placed to realise its strategy to compete successfully? Is the transfer of knowledge helping other employees to develop in the team or department?
Wider programme	What is the impact of implementing a talent programme in other areas such as the ethicality of the programme about employees

| implications | who are excluded from the programme? Do they feel neglected, devalued and demotivated? How is the programme message communicated to the remainder of the workforce outside the programme? How transparent is the TM programme? Is the talent pool representative of the workforce? Is there gender diversity in the talent pool or those of those identified as talent? Is the evaluation findings utilised in improving the TM programme within the organisation? |

Source: Author

7.3 EMPIRICAL AND CONCEPTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Talent management as a relatively new managerial concept continues to receive attention from practitioners and academics. However, after nearly two decades of research in the field and despite a consensus around the meaning of elitist/exclusive talent management, empirical studies are still relatively uncommon (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Thunnissen, 2016). About the specific question of the evaluation of talent management initiatives, there is little empirical research into the ways that organisations evaluate their programmes or into the impacts that talent management has on organisations. This study contributes to the conceptual and empirical understanding of the nature of talent management in three ways.

First, provides empirical evidence which attempts to bridge the gap between organisational practice and academic interest in the field. Findings reveal that exclusive approaches to TM remain the most dominant form of practices adopted. The identification, development, and retention of talented employees were key features of the talent management processes operationalized in case organisations. Findings also indicate that the conceptualization of talent management varies from one organisation to another and while this is well known, a contribution of this study is to reveal that the differences can be located and grounded on one particular HRD driver or priority that underpins the organisation's talent philosophy.

Second, despite the large number of publications on in the last decade (Cappelli & Keller, 2014), there has been very little research on employee perspectives (viewpoint) although they remain the central subjects of TM practices. Most research has focused on the organisational interest in TM from the perspectives of managers, executives, and HR professionals which represent a narrow and distorted view of talent and talent management (Björkman et al., 2013; Dries & Pepermans, 2008; Stahl et al., 2012). This research makes a contribution by adopting an approach that seeks to gain an

understanding of TM from employees' perspectives (both within and outside the talent pool) in addition to managerial perspectives.

Third, although many business leaders, academics, and practitioners attach importance to TM as a means of developing human capital, with respect to the impact or effectiveness of talent management practices on both the organisation and its employees, very little is known. There is a lack of empirical research that explores the effectiveness of talent management initiatives adopted by organisations (Thunnissen, 2016). This research makes two contributions to the understanding of the nature evaluation of TM practices: First, it explored how organisations assess the impact of TM initiatives. Secondly, it developed an impact evaluation model from the study to guide organisations and practitioners in assessing the impact of TM practices on both the organisation and its employees.

7.4 MANAGERIAL CONTRIBUTION

Although the aim of this study was to contribute to the conceptual and empirical understanding of the nature of talent management and its evaluation especially in private sector organisations, empirical findings reveal real life problems and challenges organisations are likely to face in the adoption, implementation, and maintenance of TM initiatives. This thesis provides five contributions that managers and HR practitioners may need to take into account in running talent management programmes. First, in the issue relating to gender inclusiveness in talent pools, evidence indicates that organisational TM practices in Techco (manufacturing) were gendered biased and this led to a situation where there was a reproduction of inequality in status between women and men (Britton, 2000). This evidence conforms to the idea that the ideal manager is strongly linked to masculine stereotypes such as competitiveness or assertiveness rather than feminine attributes i.e. a 'think talent- think male phenomenon' (Festing et al., 2014). Reflecting on gender bias in TM practices, it is possible that organisations miss out on talented employees when female employees, for example, are excluded from the talent pool due to unintended sex discrimination and the assumption that in fast moving business environments women are confronted with challenges in respect to reconciling strategic management positions with family life balance (Holst & Wiemer 2010).

Based on this finding, for organisations to maximise the full potential of their talented employees and avoid gender-biased TM practices, the concept of inclusion with regards to gender diversity should be taken into consideration when identifying and developing employees into the talent pool. TM practices can only be 'considered inclusive when it supports all talented employees equally to contribute fully and effectively to the

organisation, regardless of their gender-stereotypical orientation or sex' (Festing et al., 2014:6).

The second contribution to managerial practice is in the area of giving talented employees the opportunities to develop at their own pace. Although from an organisational perspective, a definitive goal of fast-track schemes is to develop and retain high calibre employees with the potential to succeed to a more senior management position (Viney et al., 1997), findings indicated that fast-tracking employees could be counterproductive. This was evident in the failure of a high potential employee to succeed in a more senior and strategic role in a case organisation, and this was seen as a lost investment for the organisation because of the inability of the employee to continue in the management role.

High potential employees that are fast-tracked are often identified and rewarded as a result of their strong performance and distinctive qualities, for example, a drive for mastery and achievement, assertiveness, self-confidence and ability to use initiatives (Kovach, 1986; Iles, 1997). The hazard in developing and promoting employees too quick is that it does not give them the opportunities to develop other areas of competence and capabilities that come with time and experience. For example, leaders may be limited by the values and perspectives that accompany their relatively early life stage, and lack the necessary experience and emotional maturity to be effective leaders (Khoo & Tham, 2012). Subsequently, many fast-tracked high potential employees derail when they get into senior management positions (Kovach, 1986; Iles, 1997).

This thesis, therefore, argues that in identifying and fast-tracking the development of high potentials, organisational talent schemes should firstly be designed to allow employees to develop at their own pace. Secondly, rather than label high potentials as failures when they are not meeting the desired performance expectations in their new roles, organisations should be prepared to accommodate the risk of allowing fast-tracked high potential employees to experience failure. For example, they should be given the opportunity to practice their judgment, make mistakes, make sense of approaches to correct the circumstance for themselves and to mature or develop into their jobs (Taylor, 2004).

Third, transparency and communication of the talent management processes represent another important contribution to managerial practice. Evidence reveals that lack of transparency in the TM process was counterproductive in the sense that it raised a lot of suspicion and dissatisfaction amongst employees (both at senior and junior levels). For example, two major concerns evident were the lack of disclosure of who was on the

talent list and how the talent scheme initiatives were communicated to the non-participating population. Employees who had little or no information on the TM programme felt disappointed at the lack of development opportunities and progression while the lack of communication as to the intention of the talent scheme to senior level managers brought about a lukewarm attitude to it. In this respect, the managerial implication is that when adopting an exclusive approach to TM, organisations should ensure that the excluded population do not feel harmed or dehumanised in the process of regarding a small group of employees as talented and who are judged to be contributing disproportionately to the success and competitiveness of the organisation (Swailes, 2013). Furthermore, since TM strategies are said to be implemented in the name of boosting organisational performance and sustaining competitiveness, the process should be openly and widely communicated so as to get employees onboard on what the management is trying to achieve by adopting this initiative.

Fourth, giving direct line managers the sole responsibility of identifying talented employees raises an ethical question of fairness (Swailes, 2013) in the talent management process. Evidence from this research shows that line managers' inputs play a crucial role in who is identified a talent or not. From the viewpoint of employees who are excluded from the talent pool, favouritism remains a huge concern when the process of identification is solely the direct line manager's responsibility. Although evidence indicated some degree of openness regarding access to opportunities for development and progression into a more senior position, only employees nominated by their line managers' eventually make it to the talent pool. Furthermore, evidence indicated that when newer employees are identified and selected into the talent pool ahead of older employees with similar qualifications, there is a feeling of unfairness amongst employees including those who are not interested in furthering their careers. For those aspiring to advance their careers, there is demotivation regarding career progression because they are being overlooked especially for younger employees. Based on this evidence, this thesis argues that in addition to the line manager's input, considerations should also be given to the adoption of multiple identification processes (i.e. boxed performance and potential matrices, strategic talent review meetings, 360-degree feedback) in order to give employees equal access to developmental opportunities and avoid any form of unfairness and unintentional bias in the organisation's talent identification processes.

Fifth, managing the expectations of employees in the talent pool can represent a challenge for both organisations implementing an exclusive approach to TM and for participants in the talent scheme. Findings reveal that when employees are identified as

talented and put into an organisational talent pool, they are confronted with issues relating to high expectations from their organisations, managers and even from their colleagues which put high pressure on them to succeed. For this study, two main concerns are raised; firstly, in addition to their current job roles, evidence indicated that talent scheme participants have other work-related goals that they are expected to achieve in relation to their development in the talent scheme. This resulted in participants investing extra hours (unpaid) at work to meet these additional responsibilities, and these pressures led to excessive stress which affected employee's work-life balance particularly in the face of stretchy assignments. This thesis, therefore, argues that in order to reduce problems associated with employee burnout, it is important for organisations to provide necessary support and guidance for talent schemes participants to enable them better prepare for challenges and increased demands they may face while undergoing talent development initiative. Also, it is equally important for participants to be informed of the sort opportunities open to them as well as how the current business climate the organisation operates in might limit or impact on such opportunities.

7.5 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study inevitably has its limitations. First, although it provided rich data on TM from management and employee perspectives, it was limited to four large case study organisations in the private sector which may not be representative of TM practices in the public sector or non-profit organisations. Future research should include comparative studies that explore both employees and organisational perspective on TM across private, public and non-profit organisations.

Secondly, case study organisations were selected from four different industries (healthcare, hospitality, manufacturing and logistics) and although findings revealed similarities in the talent management processes, significant variations were evident in how talent and talent management were conceptualised. For example in one case, talent management was essentially driven by succession planning and human resource planning. In another, talent management equated to more general HRM. In another, talent management revolved around key/pivotal positions where talented employees are identified and developed to fill these positions, and TM was also reflected in the classification of employees into top, middle and low performers. Further research is needed to explore whether specific TM philosophies are prevalent in industries with similar characteristics or if these variations do occur regardless of the type industry organisations operate in.

Third, data indicated that human capital ideas played a key role in the adoption of TM practices, but it was also evident that institutional isomorphism appeared to influence the TM strategy adopted in three of the four case study organisations. For example, in Parcelco (logistics), mimetic pressure was visible in the adoption of a particular measure that was deemed to be successful in another organisation providing similar services which led to a restructuring of the TM approach utilised. Future research should explore the role of institutional environment in the adoption of TM strategies.

Fourth, findings revealed that the TM strategy operationalized at Techco (manufacturing) for example, appeared to be gender biased i.e. largely excluding female employees from the talent management initiative. According to Maier (1999:70), this sort of practice is conceptualised as embodying 'values, characteristics, and qualities more commonly associated with one sex than the other.' Future research is needed to explore the gender inclusiveness of talent pools in organisations as well as to explore whether all talented employees (including minorities) are given equal opportunity in assessing the talent management programme.

Lastly, the main sources of information were in-depth, semi-structured interviews and organisational documents. Although evidence from the interviews reflects a managerial narrative suggesting that TM programmes have a positive impact on retention, higher engagement, upskilling managers and internal promotions, there was no available data demonstrating the direct impact of the TM programmes on operational or financial performance arising from programme implementation. Future research is required to explore how TM programmes directly impact on or contribute to operational and financial performance.

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213

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APPENDICES

Appendix A- Informed consent letter

Informed Consent Letter

Title of Study:

Talent Management: A case study of private sector organisations in the UK

Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully.

The purpose of this study is: to gain a thorough understanding of Talent Management (TM) practices in private sector organisations and to explore how TM initiatives are evaluated as well as their impact on organisations and employees. This research will seek to understand how organisations identify and develop future leaders and high potential employees. It will also seek to understand what impact such initiatives have on both the organisation and its employees.

What will the study involve? The study will involve a series of interviews lasting about thirty minutes to an hour for each participant. Those to be interviewed will include Talent manager, HR/ line/senior manager (mentors) and employees in and outside the talent pool. The sessions will with permission be audio taped and transcribed.

Confidentiality: All information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. After the completion of my thesis and the award of PhD certificate, data collected will be destroyed. Participants can receive a copy of the result of the study on request.

There will be no identifying information given during the interview. Only interview results or anonymous quotes will be presented in the thesis or other publication.

Risks and Benefits: There are no known risks involved in this study. The only cost to you will be the time required to participate in the interview. This research will help to understand how organisations manage talented employees and what impacts this has on the organisation and its employees.

Voluntary Participation: "I understand that my involvement in this study is completely voluntary and that I can decline participation or withdraw at any time."

Ethics Approval: This research has been approved by the university of Huddersfield business school research ethics committee. For more information regarding ethical approval of this research, please do not hesitate to contact the Chair, Dr Eleanor Davies (e.davies@hud.ac.uk) ☎ 01484 472121 or the Administrator Alex Thomson (alex.thompson@hud.ac.uk) ☎ 01484 472529

Consent Statement: Having read the above, I agree to participate in this study and consent to the above. Moreover, I agree not to disclose any information that could be linked to any specific individual. Finally, I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form.

_____   _____

(Signature of participant)   (Date)

_____   _____

(Signature of researcher)   (Date)

Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated

If you have any further questions regarding your participation, the results, or this study in general, please feel free to contact us:

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Appendix B- Interview guide for senior managers

1) Please describe what talent management means in your organisation?

2) How do you define talent? i.e. who do you classify as a talent or what does 'talent' refer to in your organisation?

3) Who has the responsibility for talent management in your organisation?

4) Please describe what role the HR department plays in the overall TM process?

5) How long has your organisation been involved in talent management (TM), or talent-related activities, such as talent training, talent recruitment?

6) Why is your organisation into TM?

7) What group of employees is your talent programmed structured for?

8) How does your organisation identify and select employees into the TM programme?

9) What programmes or development methods do you run to develop talent? i.e formal training, shadowing etc.

10) How important is it to keep key employees and what strategies do you have to retain them?

11) How do you evaluate TM initiatives/programme in your organisation?

12) How do you assess the impact of TM strategies and practices on overall business performance?

13) What challenges do you face in making talent management programmes a success in your organisation.

14) Are you aware of any downside to running talent programmes that you are concerned about?

15) If there are any concerns what measures are put in place to address them?

16) What is the future for TM in your organisation?

Appendix C- Interview guide for line managers

1. What is your perception of the value of talent management within your organisation? i.e. how important is TM to organisation?
2. What do you think of the role line managers' play in the overall TM process?
3. Do you have sufficient time in supporting the developmental needs of your subordinates?
4. Do you/your organisation offer any form of coaching, mentoring to employees in the talent programme?
5. How do you evaluate TM initiatives/programme in your organisation?
6. Do you send any form of evaluation report of the participants to the HR? If so at what stage i.e before, during and after the training programme.
7. What benefit s do you think TM brings to the organisation and participants?
8. In what ways could line managers be further involved in TM initiatives/programmes in order to make a greater impact in developing the skills and competencies of talented/high potential employees your organisation?
9. What challenges do you/your organisation face in making talent management programmes a success in your organisation.
10. Are there any downside to running talent programmed that you are concerned about?
11. If there are any concerns what measures are put in place to address them?
12. What do you think of development and learning in your organisation?
13. What is the future for TM in your organisation?

Appendix D- Interview guide for employees in TM programme

1. How were you selected for the organisational talent programme?
2. Do you have a portfolio of what to accomplish i.e. monthly, quarterly developmental goals?
3. What are your ambitions now you are on the programme?
4. Do you have a mentor or coach to help your development?
5. If yes, in what way do they help you?
6. Do you have sufficient support for your development from managers and mentors?
7. If yes what sort of support are you given?
8. What evaluation/feedback does your organisation offer in relation to your development?
9. Where do you see yourself after the talent program? i.e career advancement
10. Do you have self-development plan to complement your training?
11. What do you think of the benefits of being in the talent programme?
12. Do you have any personal concerns in respect to those not in the talent programme?
13. What improvements would you like to see in the talent management program?

Appendix E- Interview guide for employees outside the TM programme

1. What do you know about the talent programme in the organisation?
2. If given the opportunity, would you like to be part of it?
3. Have you had any career development discussions since joining your organisation?
4. How does your organisation identify your learning and development needs?
5. Does your organisation offer any form of supervisions?
6. What is involved in your supervision meeting?
7. In what ways does your organisation Improve skills and knowledge that can be immediately applied at work?
8. Does your organisation provide sufficient development and learning opportunities for all employees?
9. Do you think the organisation is getting the best out of you?
10. What do you think the organisation can do to help employees develop their full potential in the organisation?
11. How do you feel about not being in the talent/leadership programme?
12. What do you think of development and learning in your organisation?

Appendix F- Interview transcripts

This appendix contains samples of two interview transcripts. The data is presented in a way that protects the anonymity of the research participants and case study organisations.

Research Student: RS, Interview Participant: IP

PARTICIPANT'S DATA 1- Senior HR Manager at Careco

RS: Please can you describe what talent management means in your organisation?

IP: It is promoting talent from within to make sure we have a succession of staff who may start as support workers, but then when team leaders leave or move on to progress as deputy manager, we have somebody who can replace them. It is much easier for us to recruit internally because people already know Careco, they understand our values and know what we are looking for, know what we are about. We get to know them and hope they can progress with our company.

RS: How important is this or how key is this to your organisation?

IP: I would say it's extremely important. Everyone in the organisation does have a vision and value. The same value for everybody and it's contained in our supervision. It's about learning from each other, learning from day to day about valuing each other and valuing feedback from your peers and valuing your own development. So with our talent management programme, the secondment we have an awards system of bronze, silver and gold and it's the values that underpin the award system.

RS: Who do you see as a talent or how do you define talent in your organisation?

IP: Hmmm. That is broad. Talent refers to someone that can bring a skill to us that we find valuable. That can be open and massive because it could be their commitment, their loyalty and it could be their administrative skill; it could be their organisational skills, it is quite broad, something that could be interesting or help us progress going forward.

RS: Who is responsible for the talent management in your organisation?

IP: That's quite broad as well. The person who wants to progress that can be responsible for their own development. It goes more wide than would be the managers, the direct line manager, the GM, the human resources and goes right to the directors. CSM will be heavily involved, Director of Operations who actually put together the bronze, silver and gold awards.

RS: So in other words, talent management is not restricted to the HR?

IP: No it's everyone's responsibility. If a person wants to develop within a company, they need to push themselves forward and make it known to us. They are given the award system that we have put in place to help them progress, so that we can periodically review. If we give them the award and they then don't finish the award or it is not acceptable standard, it's their responsibility to pull themselves to manage themselves. The manager of the home will help them as well support them with that as well as CSM, HR. Operations' Director used to be head of the training as well as CSM but now she is the director. She is also quite heavily involved as her passion is CPD and again to director level.

RS: Can you describe the role of the HR in talent management programme?

IP: Okay, we get most of our information from the managers of who they feel would be right to go on one of the successor on winning the award programme. We do the health checks, so as we do the health checks, we go through the members of staff's name and know a little about them and how they are getting on within their roles and if they are doing above and beyond or if they have some qualities and values that we can tap into. We will then look at putting them on the bronze award with their agreement; we talk it through with them. HR will then meet with them periodically to see how their award is going and then we would also encourage them to apply for internal vacancies as at when it would be available that would be suitable for them. HR will interview first round for deputy secondment and then secondments who want to become full deputies.

RS: How long is your secondment programme?

IP: 6 months, but depends on if you see somebody that has the right values that might be a little bit longer, we can extend it for a little bit longer. Everyone is different and their learning is different. So it depends on what has happened, if there is change of management or location that can kind of upset the consistency. So it can be extended, we've done that with at least one of the secondment but normally its 6 months.

RS: is it possible to do it before the expiration of 6 months or does it depend on the need of the organisation as well?

IP: Needs of the organisation as well. They can do it sooner and if they do the awards sooner and collect all the evidence they need and if we have a deputy post available, they are able to apply as well. It's very kind of flexible to suit each individual.

RS: How long has this programme been in your organisation?

IP: Three years.

RS: Other than the deputy management secondment which you talked about, what are the other developmental programmes that you've got in your organisation?

IP: We have just started something new that started in October. It's a fast track graduate scheme. Basically it's in the final stage of being finalised. But we are looking for graduates but not necessarily graduates in health and social care but graduates of other kinds of degrees to start with the organisation as support workers, work through an award scheme for six months and after 6 months, they can then come to a meeting with us and if they meet the criteria, they will be eligible to apply for an acting team leader or team leaders as well. After those six months, they will be again eligible to apply (if they meet the criteria) for a deputy role. So even though we've all sorts of training of talents from within or growing of all kinds of talent from within , we are as well wanting to tap in some external recruitment for managers, for people who have started with us as support worker and get to know us before coming in as a manager.

RS: This means you are not just looking for talent from within. What is the process of getting talent outside of your organisation?

IP: this is very new, so we are hoping this is going to be our new way of doing things. At the moment we would advertise in recruitment agencies, job centres, indeed, job first. We are looking at having our first open day at the city next week which is something new to us. There is also the recommend a friend, so people already working for us, if they know somebody looking for work, they could start work and both parties would get a bonus. That covers it. We are trying to tap into new ways of attracting people. In the current climate of new employment, you would not think so because we have a lot of vacancies that we are sometimes struggling to fill.

RS: From your experience and knowledge of HR, why do you think you struggle with this aspect of trying to recruit certain people into your organisation?

IP: Generally I think with care there is a little bit of stigma attached to it. I feel the kind of client group we support is quite difficult and it's not for everybody. We do not look for people who have experience of working with similar client group or working with care. It's more about the person's values and their attributes and commitment and their character. So maybe it's not for them when they start or the job description is not for them. I think that personal care might put some people off as well as hours of work. Broadly as well, I

think it's more acceptable now to not be in employment than it would have been four or five years ago. Also depends on the time of the year as well. At the moment, it's difficult because its holiday and the children are off and it is nice weather, we have problems recruiting at Christmas as well. We seem to have a lot of movement in September as well for people leaving to the university. So we have spots of high turnover.

RS: With all these, why do you think your organisation is involved in talent management?

IP: Because we have realised that is how we are going to successfully grow organically and maintain the quality. Top people who have come through the ranks, started to learn our values form the shift floor; they are going to make better managers than someone who maybe has no experience of working in a home setting but has got a management qualification. It is very different in practice than it is in theory. I think that when we realised we have got some superb staff and we need to commit them as well as they commit to us. Care is not a very well paid job but people value and care about themselves, care about others, and this goes hand in hand with loyalty. And if they contribute towards us, we are committed to contribute towards them as well.

RS: what group of employees is your talent programme structured for?

IP: It's not limited to anybody. It's just people who are committed, flexible, have the right value and want to progress, because some people are just happy being support workers and that is okay too. Not everyone wants to progress in their role which works for us because we won't be able to have series of talent programmes. Everyone is eligible for the secondment if that is what they want to do.

RS: How does your organisation generally identify and select employees into this talent management programme.

IP: We have managers and it's their judgement during supervision, through shift floor observations. It's also support worker or team leaders themselves who have expressed interest in wanting to progress and what they can do to give them a step up on the ladder and how they can get ahead by doing it. We have the line managers' observations and take their feedback from health checks as well as CSM's. And when we visit the homes, we spend time there just observing and we can pick out people who are but ultimately the manager's observations.

RS: From the managers' recommendation, does it end there or do you do other things before they can actually get on the programme?

IP: We review their supervision, staff meeting attendance, sickness record, any disciplinary records. We review their application form but not with reason to strike them from management experience before and that is just more for our reference rather than anything else. To try and see what qualities they may have. If they want to apply, they need to submit an application form, not just the Careco application form but more specific of the role and why they want to develop, what they feel they can offer the post, what qualities they have, what they have learnt since they've been here and then come for an interview.

RS: With your application, is there job description of what you expect from them as well?

IP: Yes, we do.

RS: is it attached to the application?

IP: Yes. We will send out a poster advertising the vacancy within the internal. That poster will then be put in the communication book for all staff to see and in the first instance, they need to chat with their manager and if everyone is happy, they will then contact the human resources and we will send the application pack out which will be the job description and application pack.

RS: Earlier you mentioned, the bronze, silver and gold award, does it have to follow that hierarchy? You have got to go through the bronze first? There is no way of jumping the queue?

IP: No, it goes through bronze with skills we feel they will need to be a team leader. So they work on the bronze while as support workers and then after completing the bronze, they will work on silver as team leader and with silver, they will need competence, skill-wise to be deputy and when they are deputy, they will work on the gold for what they need to become manager.

RS: what programmes are there to develop your secondment? Do you go for training, shadowing of one another? What actually brings about the development in this programme?

IP: It is a mixture. They shadow the manager with regards to aspects of the manager's role. It could be shadowing the supervision, shadowing the medication audit. Quite a lot of it is on the job learning. It's a structure pack of what we expect them to be shown on secondment and there needs to be evidence that they have been shown that and they have completed it. We have management CPD days secondments are able to access.

So it could be something as identified by senior management team that we have identified as a gap knowledge of the managers and the deputy secondment come to attend that. We have educational days that are part of management meetings every month, so maybe an hour session or something relevant at that time. So, it could be CQC framework, so we tap into that. External training, NVQs are available at the time and the right level. They might be looking at NVQ level four, level 3 quality leader. But this depends on the individual as well as something we have noted and will benefit from we would look at trying to access some kind of training for them with the internal or external. If we have a secondment manager, we would also look at them that they might deliver some kind of training to the new staff. It could be that they are responsible for delivering training if that is something they are interested in or something they have got a lot of experience of.

RS: do you have a portfolio for the employees for the secondment programme and if you do, what does it entail?

IP: They own portfolios specifically for individuals. The portfolio should contain the bronze award with all the supporting evidence showing that they have actually completed it and understand. At the front of each session, if it is a medication, at the medication audit, they would have to write the brief description on what that would entail. What they need to do, what they need to look for. All portfolios are not standard. The member of staff makes it personal and it's their interpretation as well. We see a lot of them come through and they are all very different.

RS: Who draws up the portfolio? Who is in charge? Who makes when they are meant to accomplish in specific times?

IP: The manager who signs things off for them every month. And would also put in place if something would happen every couple of months, they would also itemise when they will be able to show that relevant session. Example, something like medication order is made every month and is not being shown and it's common, they would itemise the date for that. CSM will periodically check it during their monthly visit and HR will check it during their health checks if it's available or sometimes the person has it at home because they are working on it. We have general interest in it as well.

RS: Who draws up the structure?

IP: like I said earlier, that was done by our then CSM initially, who put together the award system.

RS: When they go through the programme, are they guaranteed a deputy manager job or are they going through a talent …waiting?

IP: No they are not guaranteed any position as deputy at the end of it. It depends on if there are vacancies available at the end of their time. What would happen is, as part of their contract, they will be offered the post once their six months is over, they will return back to their original post. Such as if they were team leader from a location, they will return back to team leader post at that location. If we do have deputy post available, they are welcome to apply at that time but again, it's not a given that they will get the post but you will hope that they've gained quite a lot of experience while they have been on secondment to be able to showcase that in the interview. But if there isn't anything available, they will go back into a pool, pending when they will be available, so they will be able to apply. All who have been on secondment and completed it have had the deputy post more or less straight away.

RS: having successfully developed these people, does your organisation have a strategy to retain them?

IP: Something quite new we are looking at as well, last year we looked at implementing a long service type wage. So if you have been with the company eighteen months, your wages increase. Moreover, we have employees system programme; we have looked at optical and dental, so we try to look at other benefits. So this is something we did not offer in the past when we were smaller but do now as we are growing and needing to keep up with our competitors. I think there is quite a lot of loyalty from employees to us after we have invested time in them and developed them. So we have these psychological contracts. We don't seem to lose or have much turnover of deputy post level.

RS: The psychological contract is a very key issue and making mention of it, it shows what your organisation is able to put forward and like you rightly said, investing time, resources in these people, then they feel a sense of connection. I will ask from your experience, do you see them sharing your values and have you had any experience towards that?

IP: Yes, we have a manager who started actually as a team leader. She came from somewhere external and she had a very bad experience where she came from and was actually a manager there but wanted to be team leader for us because she had lost all her confidence and they had maybe undervalued her and demoralised her. So when she came to us as a team leader, she has now progressed through deputy, through to a

manager and now she has in turn taken time to develop her support workers, and we instil the value she has taken from us and we fill her confidence back up and in turn she is advocating to our support workers who may be very new or maybe don't know us and instilled our values into them by sharing her own experience.

RS: Now that you've got this retention scheme or strategy in place, how do you evaluate the talent management initiatives in your organisation?

IP: At the end of the secondment, we meet with the individual for feedback reflection session to see how they felt it went and we include that in what we call a co-monitoring system so for everyone who has a secondment post, we actually basically use a spread sheet of their name, when they started, when they complete their secondment, what post they are in at that time and its updated every month. So if they have worked their way up for example, so they have a secondment post finished, has a deputy post, then they are offered a management post, it actually tracks their journey, where they have gone. I guess at that time, we will then review that to see how successful it is or not.

RS: how do you assess the impact of this programme in the overall business performance of your organisation?

IP: I would say it has impacted very positively. We have had eight secondments in the time it's been running. We have also looked at, it's not just held in one location anymore which is one of our smaller services, where we tried initially. It's been replicated in another quite small structure service and we now have two opportunities for people at the same time for 6 months for people to be on the programme that has helped us to keep our talent pool, our talent management from within rather than having to advertise it externally to hire managers. Our managers from the scheme know what we are about, they know our values and our service users and how we work so really with the secondment post, we see it as the way forwards or one of the way forward to attract our managers.

RS: You did make mention of trying out this scheme with a smaller unit, is there any reason why it's got to be a smaller unit?

IP: The manager will hopefully have more time to spend with them, it will be more structured. Some of our homes we have a 15-bed home to have a secondment post in there would be difficult because the manager won't have the necessary time to spend with them and it's pretty chaotic rather than structured. There is always something going on, whereas in the 2 smaller homes where we've got them running ,there is some down

time where managers could spend time with the secondment person and do things where as compared to 15-bed which is very busy.

RS: Have you ever had any issues where the managers supporting the employee in secondment are having issues of conflict of interest?

IP: Yes, we've had one incident of that, I think on reflection it was nothing to do with the person being in the secondment post or clash of personalities. It may just be the manager I don't think bought into what we were doing and that we went into a secondment scheme and that they should share their skill and knowledge. It was more to the knowledge is power, so they didn't want to share with the secondment as many skills would have wanted to, hence why sometimes they are actually a little bit longer, because that wasn't fair on the secondment person she had to move her elsewhere.

RS: I will like to ask, other than the managers supporting directly employees in the secondment, do you have like coaches, mentors, who assist in developing these people on secondment as well?

IP: Yes, well we started mentor scheme, again it's quite new to us and I'll say we started doing it in the last 8 months. For the last secondment we had at our newer location we had a mentor who is one of the managers. So the employee had someone to go to, but not really specifically to the scheme more just within their role of guidance, it wasn't really the secondment scheme itself, it was more just other support other than their manager, or other than the head office.

RS: will the person in the secondment be able to go to their mentors if he/she is not confident about relating certain things to their manager?

IP: That is something we worked out from the other experience I told you about, where it was that someone didn't want to share their knowledge, that individual felt awkward coming to us here who put her in that post saying that a manager wasn't willing to share. That's how quite recently we discovered that and we started the mentoring scheme across the board, for support workers as well but we have allocated a mentor to a secondment person, so they have someone that they can go to without feeling they have to come to head office and say a manager is not helping them in some ways.

RS: What is the downside to this programme?

IP: Downside to it, people who maybe have gone to a secondment may feel they need to wait till the end of secondment before applying for deputy post but again we have tried

to combat that with speaking to them and saying it's very flexible if they like and they feel it's alright for them, they are more than welcome to apply for a deputy post before the end of the secondment. In their mind secondment is 6 months, so it needs to be 6 months.

We are heavily reliant on the managers, and the downside is in the past we have chosen the wrong manager or the wrong home for the secondment programme. We think we have got that right now. We are also quite limited where we can place employees as in secondment roles because it is only certain homes where it will work, and it is not very localised which can challenging for employees who have to commute a long distance. I will hope employees expectations are managed as well. Again we are a little bit reliant on the managers for that because at the end of the programme it is not a right that they are going to have a deputy post, so we are quite clear hopefully. I believe, they will return to their original post usually of a team leader. We had a situation where that did not run just quite smoothly because we waited for one thing to happen before we could do another thing and that person was in limbo for two weeks, but we ever learn.

RS: do you provide any support for the managers to help them understand what their roles are?

IP: Yes, it's the same managers who now do our secondment. So from one secondment to the next, they've kind of had experience drawn from last secondment and initially they had a training session with our Director of what this is going to be about, what we are wanting , so it acts like sort of support what is coming through in place is very internal. It's more feedback session to the CSM with HR, its quite internal structure for managers.

RS: What do you think is the future of the TM programme in your organisation?

IP: I would think that the secondment would need at least 1 to 2 places where we would be able to offer a secondment post geographically. We are operating in other regions now, so coming from one of the country to another for secondment is not going to work. So I think it will continue to grow, maintain the same structure which at the moment really works. I guess there will be a period of review by the Operations' Director and at the time when we feel it's not reaching what we need it to, meeting our immediate need, we will then put something else in place.

RS: Can I ask finally do you have any suggestions on how this scheme can be improved in your organisations, providing quality time for people in the secondment to further enhance their potentials within the organisation?

IP: With the secondment, the idea is as a deputy they will work 2 to 3 shifts, actually shift lead and have the other 2 to 3 days as admin. So they will then tap in to what does and do their secondment maybe going forward they might need to maybe depending on the size of the home, they might need to have more time off the shop floor to be able to …if the secondment kind of grows in size or the expectation or the award grows in size to be able to complete that is quite difficult. I guess sometimes if we are short-staffed of team leaders the secondment person will drop off for team leader shift.

PARTICIPANT'S DATA 2- Graduate scheme participant at Parcelco

RS: If I may ask how you were selected for this programme in your organisation?

IP: So I guess it was very similar to other graduate scheme intake, there are series of interviews. So after the initial application, you have a phone interview, if you are successful at this stage you'll go to a sort of open day but like I'm told that is an essential stage as well, you'll get relevant information about the company …… and then next stage after that will be an assessment centre while this is going on, you have to do a series of psychometric test as well, pretty similar really in a lot of ways to a number of those graduate intake things where it's got quite intensive.

RS: What do you think you've got that actually made you to be successful as an applicant into this programme?

IP: I think the biggest point I had for the company was that I had relevant experience, obviously you've got the basic thing like a decent level degree and my degree was relevant to the role I was applying for but I think most importantly was the experience I gained in a placement doing sandwich degree.

RS: What consist of your training programme?

IP: So the operation training programme is 18 months long and over that period they basically take you through the life cycle, sort of the journey of operation to give you a broad understanding of what you need to do from the operation stand point. So there are four placements, the four placements include one hub which is our national distribution centre which we have two of them soon to be three, so you spend time at the hub. This is

sort of the first stage of the parcel process where they are coming from the clients and we do the primary sortation to our networks. The second rotation which was my second placement was in the depot which is next stage, so from the hubs all the parcel that are sorted get delivered to each of our depot around the country based on delivery point. And after that then went to central services which is sort of watching the operation function, primary project work and then the fourth and final one will be in the field team which is managing our courier, probably will be more of a remote role and doing a lot of driving on each placement.

So on each placement kind of takes a mixture of roles really, but when I started in the operation side of it, it was hands on, the hubs and depot. So initially there is an induction on roles in the transport team, night shifts, day shift, managing transport managing the boys doing the operation whereas when I came here I shift into a lot more of project or rotating work. Well that's the plan but within that there is flexibility I mean I have a four month period now coming up to what we call peak. Peak for us is Christmas we obviously deliver a lot of parcel to our client and when I started the role they were talking about this peak that was coming and I was like what is it and its crazy and our workload is sort of times by four. About 400% increase in volume day by day but I think you look at it this year I think they are forecasting over a million parcel in a day which is for a company of our size although we are relatively big that is a lot. So I kind of seconded off my graduate scheme, get plan and I'm going to do a four month stay back in the hub again. We have a new hub starting in another location so I'm going to get involved in that from Monday. So they give you an effective route, there's a framework in place where you have input.

RS: In the course of your training you made mention of those areas you are going to be going into, who sets the goals for what for you to achieve and all that?

IP: With each placement, quite at the end of that placement you do sort of presentation of your experience, what you've done and you know you have to present a project. So that kind of stipulates the 3 placement, while you are on the placement so you sit down with your new line manager, you set the sort of goals and you go through what you want to have and what they would like you to do. I guess it is initially set up by Talent and resourcing Manager and the HR team. They obviously tell you what you need to go and do but from the placement that follows from your initial one, it's kind of your own initiative to go and sit down with your new line manager and set your goals.

RS: Do you have like a portfolio of what to accomplish, maybe weekly, monthly and all that?

IP: No they don't dictate to you. I tend to before I started the placement have a period where I get my notebook out, I just set a few things that I want to do, I think the more time that I spend in the company the more I understand what is achievable while I am somewhere. So when I first started, after my first placement I didn't really know what I had to do, so I kind of was asking many questions whereas in the next placement when I go back into the hubs…. I did the hubs last year; I want to get a bit more on management experience. But there is no such structure, as for each placement we do have a performance management system which is used for everyone in the company, you basically set objectives and they are reviewed on a six monthly basis. So that kind of comes into play with it as well.

RS: If I get you right the goals are set by you sort of knowing what to achieve?

IP: Yes, I will say I have a lot of input in most of it, the manager that I'm working for ultimately will say what I'm going to be doing. So I guess that will be the goals. I think, but I have a lot of input into what I'm going to be doing, it's kind of a two way system really.

RS: Now that you are in the programme, what are your ambitions?

IP: I think when I first started; I kind of just went in with a little experience. So I wanted to get experience as much as I can in the 18 months and that hopefully lead to something I'm prepare to do. I have kind of just said to myself, I've to use the position I've as a graduate and go and do everything I can, that I won't be able to do when I have a full time role. I'm starting to get to the point where I need to kind of get myself a few sort of target of what I want to do. I guess ultimately I will like to be in management that is not because I want to necessarily manage people, it's not that kind of power trip or something, I just would like to be in a role which would ultimately be a management position you know that would be a good job and provide a decent level of income.

I think within the business I'm in now, I will probably know more after Christmas. I will probably going to end up in the hubs, and I would like to go into a management kind of role, so maybe something along the line of training of manager. I don't know but we will see how it plans out. The good thing is the managers I'm working with are really pushing me to go and apply for a role or get myself what I want to do and their not kind of saying

you are coming as a ground level and they want to put me in there rather than a supervisor or a manger and say you know give it a go.

RS: With your manager already asking you to take certain jobs and all that, what kind of rapport do you have with them?

IP: I guess it varies, I have a new manager every time I change my placement. But so far with all my managers once I get to know them a bit, it tends to get to a point where rather than just having to go through things, they will just give things off, and it almost like they will just delegate work to me but in a constructive way they will give things that they will normally do as a manager and say right I want you to go and do the shift plan for today or I would like you to go and brief the guys on the plan is for the morning.

I guess it's a positive rapport to be honest; I've fortunately not had a bad report with anyone yet. Some of the managers it takes longer to develop it, just because some other people will be more personal where as other people will just get on with it.

RS: In terms of your job since you move from one department to another in the course of your training, have you come into situations where you feel you are stuck and someone had to help you out?

IP: I had a few moments actually where I've pretty made a mistake or …… when I first did it I think I experience it more in my placement before I came into this in my 3rd year and was really worried about cocking up and making a hassle of things but to be honest at the end of the day if you don't make a mistake you can never really learn. It's a little cliché but yes couple of times approaching something in the wrong way. You know I made a mistake of a delivery once and it meant we missed all of our service target for our next day traffic, so it was an order for a parcel online and you pay for a next day service and because I change from the route it didn't. Yes you know you give your manager a shout and they will guide you in the right way and tell you not to do it again.

RS: When that mistake did happen, what kind of support did you receive?

IP: It depends what it is, obviously there is a way where somebody has to tell you you've done something wrong, no one shouted at me or anything. So I think I was at the time when I ran out stressed, they will kind of be not necessarily aggressive response but people be like we need to sort it out now, let's get it done. But apart from that most managers will say don't worry about it, it's nothing major. Don't do it again but in the future do this, so tell me if you are going to change something.

RS: I want to know what sort of feelings you get from that sort of support when someone is not putting the blame on you and how does it help with your training?

IP: It's positive. I don't like when someone comes and hassle me if I've done something wrong, it's the way that I work with other people if they have done something wrong. It's definitely beneficial and I think if I had a manager that did it in that way I will probably be less responsive to him, I think it's pretty quite rational but that I think it's definitely a good thing.

RS: Other than the support given from various managers, do you have a mentor or coach who is helping out with your training and development?

IP: Yes, I do have a mentor and the Talent and resourcing manager who isn't technical part of my training. My official mentor will be meeting with me next week. I probably meet with him once every month or month and half but to be honest with you, we cross other part quite regularly and we could speak on the phone. I won't say it's informal but I know I can speak with him and he will give me advice and he is quite impartial. So he is kind of my mentor and I also a buddy, which is a bit of cheesy phrase. If I have any problem I don't feel I can speak to my manager I will give him a ring and say you know what, what do you think. It's quite good you know whereas when you are speaking with managers, when you know they are senior people, you don't want to bother them with little things. If its someone you know you could say what do you think of this you can speak to your buddy, yes he is just the person to chat you, you know, he knows what you've done he knows what you've been through at the same time. I just started being a buddy myself.

RS: You talked about having support from the manger as well as your mentor. What kind of support do you see them providing other than what you've just talked about?

IP: It's definitely a holding hand, in terms of my line manager support; it's more of day to day objective setting. My mentor is definitely more like I said strategic and long term. Like my mentor, he is not going to necessarily sit me down with set objectives whenever I see him, but every time I see him he is trying to push me to do more and more to find out where I see myself in the company an gauging few of my interest and how I'm finding different placement and then I go back and meet with my line manager every sort of 6 weeks we do sort of a review.

RS: Do your line manager and mentor have sufficient time to support your development?

IP: My mentor, always surprises me when I see him in that he is the calmest man ever and the really good thing about him is I know how busy he is because I work with the guys under him and the guys under those guys, they are equally busy. So he must be…. He is all over the place but whenever you sit down with him it's like there is no one else in the room, there is no problem going by which is really good you know. It's really frustrating sometimes to speak to someone who has got no time for you which is not a fault of their own but it's good to speak to someone who can develop that in fifteen minutes.

RS: So that's kind of a good one from your mentor. What about your line manager, is it same or does it change?

IP: It varies from person to person, I will say the line manager I have had definitely 2 of them who have always offered me time if I needed it but I guess it's so much down to the guys, that of my line manager generally operationally day to day people so they are generally quite busy in the environment that you are in whereas with your mentor I guess they just sort of ….. they end up taking on that role and they make it a bit more of a point of sort of session proper time aside but really I've not got a problem with it with the line manager but it's a little more informal than with the mentors.

RS: What sort of evaluation or feedback does your organisation provide to you in relation to your training?

IP: So as I said before at the end of every placement I do a presentation, so that is a two way thing. I do one that I've done on a project and they give me a feedback on more of the presentation, more of the content and which inevitably feed in back on my work placement. At the end of each placement I have a feedback template which is completed by my line manager and other people I have worked with while I was there. So that is something you go through in your review as well as and so far it's all been positive. I had an appraisal yesterday for the placement I have done here and you kind of go through it, you can make your own comments. So if there are any points where they've said this could be improved or whatever you have your chance to feed back on it and yes that is sort of the feedback trip journey. In your day to day, it is either you've done a good job or a bad job but that is the structure part of it.

RS: Have ever been a situation where you feel things should be done differently that is this is not the right way to go about things?

IP: I think yes, not with my mentor but I've memories where I've pulled managers, where I've said I need to do something differently or I'm not going to do it that way that's going to be an advice. I will never pretty do that if I was not sure of what I was talking about otherwise you can look a bit silly but yes I guess I've had a bit of that nothing too serious but day to day things where you've been involved for a while, you felt comfortable with doing something and say I need to do it differently.

RS: And how do the manager handle the feedback from you?

IP: As long as you are right, I guess if they challenge you, you've got to back that up, by and large you don't really get resistance from the managers. I guess the place where you will get resistance is from the workers, when you are working and managing the workers you have to change the way a driver does his route because he is not doing it right, that's one of the challenge but you've got to grit your teeth.

RS: Is there anything put in place to address this area of challenge with your workers?

IP: To alleviate the conflict, I don't think you can ever get rid of it completely. The only thing we can do is set the standard and potentially introduce that, I am looking at the moment with the guys introducing some sort of standardised dash board with incentives and KPI's on. Not run like being measured but if you set a standard and you make it a positive thing and which we are trying to do, we are trying to make sort of a lead set up and we are trying to encourage people that if we move up this lead table you know we will be getting rewards. And so incentivising I guess is the way of doing things but sometimes you can't incentivise people because it's just day to day thing and you can't always reward someone just for doing their role correctly.

I think it's just training really and setting standards and if you set the standard, make sure you follow it yourself. So I'm never aware of there is you know knocking off any really for you, if you are really sure you know the way, you do it, suitable originally, make sure you do it, do it the way you taught other people to do it.

RS: I will further ask where do you see yourself after the programme?

IP: I'm, looking to stay here, I'm enjoying the programme but I think long term I will probably get to go into management role in the hub network. So that is kind of the ambition, apparently can't define exactly where but I'm still kind of using the time I've got to really find out where I want to be, what I will be doing because I think you will not really have the chance to do it. So that's kind of a goal or plan. I don't want to finish the

graduate scheme and then disappear into the background, hopefully everything will work out.

RS: From your answer to that, it's more like you've got a focus on what to achieve, if I may ask what other development plan are you putting in place for yourself other than the ones being given to you from the organisation?

IP: I guess at the end of each month, no it's not my placement it's an on-going thing, I kind of say I'm enjoying this and if I'm not enjoying it change it. So you know a bit of an on-going personal thing where you kind of chart to yourself in a corner and to say you are doing it, it's fun if you can see yourself doing it. At the moment I'm kind of……. sort of carrying on finding things, I think it's a positive thing really.

RS: Do you have like if am going to go into management can I read up more on it, can I do this even though I'm not giving the opportunity here, can I do something to advance myself. Have you ever thought about that or do you consider doing that?

IP: Well there are a few things that I want to do, launch into, that I know I'm going to need. So there are some few training course I want to do as well for myself, things like a CPC, I need that to be operation manager but if I could get it now, while I have the time to do it that is something I know I need to do. So I've sort of sat down with Talent and resourcing manager and planned that out. So I'm probably going to do it next year it will make sense. I think looking at a few qualification and then in terms of my placement you know what you are talking about, I decided to go back to the hubs this peak even though I didn't have to because I think I'm going to end up in the hubs.

RS: That's like self-development for you?

IP: Yes, I guess so, but not really. I could have kind of gone anywhere this peak there wasn't really a plan where I go. So I kind of pushed that because I think that's where I will end up so I'm trying to structure my own training programme around what I want. I guess you are going to try and manipulate it a bit.

RS: What do you think of the benefits of been on this talent programme?

IP: I think for me I know that at the end of it when I get the job I will have a lot of experience within the company for the people I'm going to be working with. So the people that are around me you know in the business, they might be experts in their field and work there for many years and have a hell lot of knowledge but they wouldn't have spent time in every different operation area of the company. So when I come into these

roles and I have a problem with an area, I would be able to trace it back and say I know why that happen because I was in the field team and courier ……… that's why that is gone wrong. I think that is the understanding that will benefit me a lot, and a few people have commented on that saying you are pretty lucky because there's not many people in the company who have done that and there is a few people who maybe have gone from one area to another which is quite a big step but there is not many who have got the chance to go around and see all of it which is good.

RS: And that benefit is for yourself, do you think there are also benefits to the organisation you are on this programme?

IP: Yes, I guess at the end of it you are talking about talent pool which is what they are doing here I could potentially end up at going to any area of the operation, so I think they hire the graduate as long as they are good and put a little bit of effort.

You've got someone there who can use in wherever you have a hole, obviously they guide you as in what to do as well but you know you've got a kind of flexible employee that is got a good level of experience, though I see a bit of intelligence from the academic side of it but then they got that experience and they network with a lot of people. That is another thing that has been quite important is the networking I have manage to do while I have been on all these rotation (placements). You might only ever meet all the people out there over a 20 year period working here something like that. Yes I don't know but if you are going as depot manager you are not going to meet all people at different area because your job is at the depot, whereas if I have problem with future roles I will probably let someone who I have met and worked with, who works in an area you can tell things will be a bit easier.

RS: Have there been times when a manger has been off sick, and you actually stepped in his position to actually put things in order? On vacation or something?

IP: Yes probably on vacation, I want say I took over his role but things he was guiding me on. I just basically carried on doing it myself, when he came back I said I have done this, I guess that has happened a lot quite recently I have been ordering lots of product for the depot and all mangers are aware of it. I have done a bit of that but not like a full role so it probably will be a good thing to do actually but not really, not really there is some other people there.

RS: The reason why I'm saying this is in terms of the cost, sometimes if the manger is away they might need to bring somebody in to do it but because you are there you just

take over the role not like you are taking over the position, what that does is it contributes as well to the organisation monetarily.

IP: It's something that they do do. There is another operation graduate also from my former university in my intake, he was at the depot in another location where the depot manager was off for 2 weeks, he got put in place to manage the depot which is good, and so it's something that they do do.

RS: Do you have any personal concerns about those not in the talent programme? Like yourself you are coming, you are fresh and are there no people saying he has only just come and he is doing this, I've been here for this long. Have you had any?

IP: You do get that but I've not had anything myself directly but I think you are always going to have people who have been there for a long time who feel they obviously for working here for long time, like to have certain things that you get and you just got to kind of deal with that. The way I've kind of gone about when I have sensed that someone has got a bit of issue with what I'm doing, because I have just kind of arrived and I'm doing most of the stuff, I've kind worked so hard and kind of show them I'm good at what I'm doing. If I try but at the same time we all make mistake and ask those people for advice. The bad thing is when you go in and you act like you know it all and then that creates you problem because if you ever need to go to them for help you'll never going to get it. Yes, I try to be positive towards them.

RS: With this identified problem is there any suggestion you can give to the management that would not completely take away the problem but to alleviate the misgiving within the set up?

IP: I think if I have noticed a problem and it's something I feel I can help change, I will probably try and say it to them and say I've seen this problem and I would like to do this. If it's something I can't do, I guess it's a bit more difficult kind of asking someone else more senior than you to do some work but you are going to try and put some positives in what you get to do. Sometimes they come back to you and say well you are right and this is why and as long as I accept their response its fine. But I guess you might have a point when you come across a bit of resistance from them and there is no agreeing with them you kind of just do the best you can in the situation you've got. You can't always change everything unfortunately but you give it a good go.

RS: What improvement will you like to see in the talent management programme in your organisation?

IP: I think there is a good level of focus on doing your training courses while you are on a scheme but now that this NOVUS scheme is in place I would like to see the training courses that are on there that I know I'm going to need. Because it's one of the things where I know I'm going to have to do it and they would let me do it, but it's something you've got to ask to do later on but I like it to be on there. But I guess it's not quite small thing really. I can't think of any major structural changes really.

RS: What advice do you have for friends of your maybe in the university or elsewhere who will like to come on to this programme?

IP: I suppose if you are actually interested in it, just give it go I mean they've got that experience and I said to them like for people who are younger than us and are back at the university now not necessarily want to come onto this course, into graduate programme and I've said to work you need to get some experience because it's so important to get into any sort of decent graduate scheme now because they will want to know you are capable of going out and doing a job so that's kind of advice I give them. And I think for the leadership programme you've got to have some experience with managing teams and something like that. So I think a few people have been interviewed with great credentials and qualifications and some good experience but no experience of doing the management side of it even if it's only a small amount, and they've not offered them the job because they don't see in the leadership role but they can see them in other areas. So I think they only need shared experience and just general work experience so whether its voluntary work or you know maybe you can get a placement that's great. So I think the NOVUS scheme work will encourage that but whatever you can do show a bit of drive.

RS: On a final note how do you sum up your experience so far?

IP: Fast, engaging, end of the day quite very positive overall. Stressful at times but you know they force you to go and learn. Yes I can't find any negatives really, it's been generally very good and you just know you are going to come out of it with a decent job if you improve yourself.