


A framework development for talent management in the higher education sector

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Orientation: Academic staff are in high demand at South African institutions and talent retention issues are a huge challenge for university management.

Research purpose: The primary objective of this study was to develop a framework for talent management in higher education that would allow South African public universities to attract and retain academic staff.

Motivation for the study: There is a paucity of studies on the holistic talent management system within South African public universities although previous researchers attempted to investigate some of the components that constitute the topic.

Research approach/design and method: The study was subject to mixed methods to analyse data collected from a random sample survey ($n = 153$) of academic employees and semi-structured interviews ($n = 7$) of non-academic employees from one university. Quantitative descriptive data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 24), whilst the qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis.

Main findings: Seven themes emerged, highlighting shortcomings in talent management processes and practices at the investigated South African university. Specifically, workforce planning, compensation and rewards, recruitment and selection, performance management, succession planning, training and development and talent retention showed the need to revitalise a strategic approach to attract academics whilst retaining the best to ensure that South African universities achieve their visions and missions.

Practical/managerial implications: Human resource professionals and talent managers in South African public universities can use the study's findings to improve talent management practices in their institutions, which significantly lead to sustainable competitive advantage.

Contribution/value-add: This research offers human resource professionals and talent managers a talent management framework for attracting and retaining employees in the higher education sector. The proposed framework guides talent management processes and practices at South African public institutions by highlighting activities to further efficiently and effectively attract and retain academic staff.

Keywords: talent management; talent management framework; talent; universities; South Africa.

Introduction

Organisations utilise talent management as a strategic method to attract and retain professionals, resulting in a sustainable competitive advantage (Bluen, 2014). However, South African public universities are not immune to the talent management issues facing the country and like many organisations in the country they are experiencing serious challenges in attracting and retaining high-quality academic employees (Higher Education South Africa [HESA], 2011). The growing demand for academic staff and retention problems are major concerns for the university management. Most academic staff are now entering the retirement phase of their careers and there is now a need to acquire new talent into South African universities (HESA, 2011). Faced with such talent management challenges, South African universities need to revitalise approaches to attract and acquire new academic staff whilst retaining the best to ensure the long-term survival of their institutions (Sharma, 2011). Therefore, South African universities cannot ignore the significance of talent management, which focuses on ensuring that organisations have the competent staff to achieve business goals (Cheese, Thomas, & Craig, 2008).

In South African public universities, there is limited research on the integrated talent management system, although previous studies attempted to investigate some of the components that make up

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the talent management system. Previous researchers who sought to investigate talent management aspects in South African universities mainly looked at academic turnover and retention variables (Theron, Barkhuizen, & Du Plesis, 2014), whilst others only looked at the intention to quit elements amongst Generation Y academics in universities (Robyn & Du Preez, 2013). More recently, Van Zyl, Mathafena and Ras (2017) developed a framework for talent management, which lacked the peculiarities of South African universities. With scant scientific research, it remains unknown how South African universities should advance towards a talent management system given the increasing demand for academic staff and employee retention problems. As a result, this study argues that talent management system is not getting due consideration and research gaps appear to emerge in South African public universities.

Research purpose

The primary objective of this study was to develop a talent management framework in higher education that would allow South African public universities to attract and retain academic staff. Thus, this study sought to explore the talent management processes and practises of a selected South African public university in order to address talent management issues.

Literature review

Talent management

Literature provides several definitions of talent management (Armstrong, 2006; Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2012; Silzer & Dowel, 2010). Notwithstanding these definitions, there is no universally agreed definition of talent management (Ashton & Morton, 2005). However, there are some similarities in what is commonly associated with talent management practices. Schweyer (2004) defined talent management as the ability to manage the supply, demand and flow of talent through the human capital engine. Bussin (2014) went further and defined talent management as the systematic acquisition, identification, development, involvement, retention and placement of individuals who are of unique value to an organisation. In this case, organisations utilise talent management as a strategic method to attract and retain professionals, resulting in a sustainable competitive advantage.

Theoretical framework

Many frameworks for talent management are available in the literature. However, none of these frameworks has been able to explicitly address the talent management issues confronting South African institutions. For example, contemporary talent management frameworks developed by Meyer (2016) and Van Zyl et al., (2017) only cater towards the private sector, whose primary objective is organisations' profit-making. However, some aspects of their frameworks will be explored in this research. For this study, it was considered essential to select one talent management

framework depicted in Figure 1 and use it as a guideline to better explain the talent management system.

According to Meyer (2016), organisations must create a talent management policy to better guide the underlying concepts of the talent management processes and strategy. The same author goes further and explains that whilst talent management strategies may vary over time as dynamics shift, talent management policies must be followed consistently and fairly. Besides that, organisations should articulate their talent management ideology, accountability aspects, governance issues and talent management process measurement (Bussin, 2014).

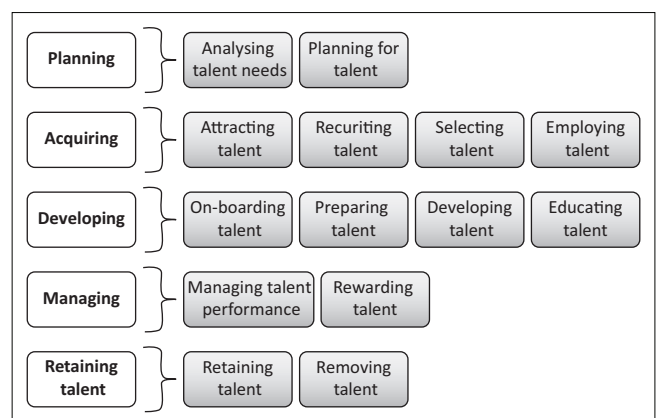
From Figure 1, notably, there are five key functions that make up talent management. This study will now explain the functions to gain further insights from the many diverse yet interconnected functions of the talent management system.

Key functions linked to talent management

Planning

The first essential step that an organisation takes in effective talent management is talent planning. Planning for talent can be split into two: talent planning and workforce planning. Several scholars concur on the practical approaches to talent planning, which includes talent management strategy, business strategy, environmental analysis and talent success profile (Bussin, 2014; Van Zyl et al., 2017). According to Bussin (2014), to guarantee that proper organisational goals are converted into talent management priorities, workforce and talent planning must be aligned to the overall company strategy.

Grobler, Warnich, Carell, Elbert and Hatfield (2006) defined workforce planning as a process that involves the development and practical implementation of action plans to have competent people in the organisation. Furthermore, the process includes a systematic procedure where organisational managers establish, review and forecast the required human capital needs (Erasmus, Schenk, & Tshilongamulenzhe, 2014). Bussin (2014) argued that workforce planning usually begins



Source: Brewster, C., Carey, L., Grobler, P., Holland, P., & Warnich, S. (2008). *Contemporary issues in human resource management: Gaining competitive advantage*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

FIGURE 1: Talent management system.

with strategic workforce planning whereby the organisation starts by clarifying the roles and skills required soon and the expected number of employees to leave the organisation.

Acquiring

Acquiring is a crucial element of talent management that focuses on attracting, recruiting, selecting and employing talent (Bussin, 2014). To attract talent, organisations often utilise the employee value proposition (EVP). Employee value proposition refers to a collection of traits and rewards that entice individuals to consider employment in the organisation whilst also persuading current employees to remain in the organisation (Bussin, 2014). These traits and benefits are what a prospective employee presumes to receive in exchange for work performed. Brewster et al. (2008) mentioned that a typical EVP can include intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction, values, ethics and culture, which employees encounter within the organisation. Furthermore, these traits and benefits tend to characterise and separate the organisation against other competing organisations (Minchington, 2006). Kochanski (2004) stated that a distinguished EVP has the potential to add and strengthen employer brand because it describes the desired organisational state in relation to strategic goals and desired culture. Therefore, this suggests and calls for talent management practitioners to design a unique EVP that can support employer's efforts in finding applicants from a rich candidate pool, also the adoption of measures to retain dedicated employees with exceptional work performance and at the same time attracting people to join the organisation without enticing them with remuneration perks (Bussin, 2014).

Another aspect of acquiring talent is recruitment, which refers to the process through which an organisation brings to light a new vacancy. Hunter (2012) explained that the recruitment process starts by communicating with the potential job applicants that a vacancy exists and ends when the selection process starts. In some cases, the recruitment process may be determined by the needs arising out of the workforce planning process (Erasmus et al., 2014). This substantiates the link between the two components of the talent management system. After recruitment, selection then comes in and this process entails screening and hiring employees with the right qualifications, skills and experience valuable to contribute more to the business organisation (Wild, Wild, Han, & Rammal, 2009). Thus, selection seeks to identify the best candidate for a job who can help an organisation in achieving its objectives. Du Plessis (2015) emphasised the need for proper procedure and fairness during the selection process because if it is not performed as it should be, it can lead to the wrong person filling the position.

Developing

Developing talent is essential for South African universities. To develop employees' skills, organisations often use several methods amongst these being training, development, career management, coaching, mentoring, succession planning. Training is a deliberate intervention for employees to acquire skills, competencies and attitudes that will enhance

organisational performance in their present jobs and most of these are short term in nature (Erasmus et al., 2014; Warnich, Carrrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2015). Furthermore, training is a deliberate intervention to address present or future shortfalls. Development is almost the same as training because both concepts are concerned about improving work performance. However, development is a comprehensive long-term learning intervention. It is a learning endeavour aimed at the growth of individuals by obtaining diverse sorts of information, skills and behaviours. It provides employees with fresh insights about themselves in the long term, allowing them to reach their full potential (Warnich et al., 2015).

Career management is another important component of developing talent in an organisation. It includes employer's efforts aimed at influencing the career development of either individuals or groups of employees (Arnold, 1997). Despite the fact that career management itself is an individual's responsibility, it must be shared with the employer, who must then play a supportive role (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011).

Coaching is another method that may be utilised to help employees develop their talent and skills. It is a one-on-one interaction involving a professional coach and an employee. The purpose of coaching is to help employees perform better at work (Schutte & Steyn, 2015). Research by Bennett and Bush (2009) showed the effectiveness of coaching and its potential to improve performance and efficiency by eliminating any obstructive patterns of behaviour.

Mentoring is another method for developing employees, particularly new staff members. It can be described as ongoing support provided by a senior employee (mentor) to a less experienced employee (mentee). Mentoring involves managing and helping new employees to support them through tough transitions by easing the path, encouraging, leading and training them in the organisation (Fletcher, 2000). Research shows that employees who benefited from mentoring managed to improve their job satisfaction, increased their commitment to their work, reduced intention to leave their jobs and even improved their work performance (Groves, 2007).

Succession planning involves various efforts to predict leadership requirements, recognising candidate pool, developing and improving leadership competencies and capabilities through planned organisational programmes (Hor, Huang, Shih, Lee, & Lee, 2010). Furthermore, creating a method for choosing possible replacements for senior employees of the organisation is also part of designing a succession planning strategy (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). The importance of succession planning is that it assists in the transition of a senior employee such as an academic professor leaving the university and adds to the development of highly promising academic staff (Warnich et al., 2015).

Managing talent

Organisations use performance management and compensation and reward management practices to manage

talent. Firstly, performance management refers to a structured goal-oriented process whereby individual goals are linked with the organisational objectives (Mondy, 2008). A broad definition indicates that it involves the alignment of organisational strategy and individual goals, continuous individual management of performance and inclusion of values and competencies in the process (Bussin, 2014). Performance management is regarded as an integral and essential component of talent management (Erasmus et al., 2012). The primary activities of this practice help to ensure that organisational objectives are constantly being met effectively and efficiently.

The second part of managing talent is compensation and reward management. Compensation is the entire amount of monetary and non-monetary incentives that a company provides to an employee in exchange for his or her work (Meyer & Kirsten, 2005). These include intrinsic rewards that are self-administered and mainly linked to the job itself for instance employee recognition, accomplishing career personal goals amongst others. Conversely, extrinsic rewards consist of direct compensation, non-direct compensation and non-financial rewards. Reward management is the method of developing and implementing various methods and policies to compensate employees based on the real value they contribute to the company (Armstrong, 2000). Rewards address the specific needs of the employees. In other words, rewards refer to compensation entitled to an employee in exchange for services he or she provides (Jiang, Xiao, Qi, & Xiao, 2009). According to Armstrong (2009), rewards are the primary source of interface between the employer and the employee, therefore they must be fair, equal and consistent. Reward management is arguably the critical component of the talent management system (Schlechter, Hung, & Bussin, 2014).

Talent retention

Talent retention encompasses several initiatives that an employer utilises to retain employees (Bussin, 2014). An expansion of this term includes organisational initiatives to mitigate voluntary turnover (Jackson & Schuler, 2004). Bussin (2014) suggested that to retain key employees, employers need to develop a retention strategy that focuses on the following core items: attractive compensation packages, conducive and congenial work environment, adequate training and developing programmes that can enable employees to grow and develop their careers. Furthermore, employers need to create a relationship between management and employees who enables employees to feel like part of the organisation, and lastly management needs to support employees on how they do their work.

Research method

Research design

The investigation utilised a case study research design to explore the talent management phenomena in a real-life environment (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As a result of time and resource constraints, the investigation utilised a single case of

single university in order to effectively manage it as contrary to a broader scale investigation of all 26 public universities in South Africa (Rule & John, 2011).

Research approach

This investigation embraced mixed methods to contribute to the existing talent management literature in a more in-depth way. The use of the mixed method facilitates the removal and elimination of potential gaps, which might be present during the collection of data if one method is used to collect the data (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delpont, 2013). Furthermore, mixed-methods increases the validity of the research instruments by minimising bias inherent that may arise if one method of data collection is used (Flick, 2011).

Research paradigm

This study assumed the interpretive and positivist research paradigms as the researcher sought to benefit from 'both worlds'. The idea was to explore and grasp complex meanings of the talent management phenomenon at the selected university as supported by various scholars (Quinlan, Babin, Carr, Griffin, & Zikmund, 2015; Yin, 2008).

Population and sample

Research population of this investigation included academic and non-academic employees from a South African public university. On the one hand the inclusion criteria for the selection of academic employees in this study were based on the premise that the participants should be employed either on a permanent, fixed term contract or on temporary basis at the selected university. On the other hand, the inclusion criteria for non-academic employees (seven human resource experts) into the study were only based on the premise that the participants should be responsible for the overall talent management practices at the selected university.

As the study adopted mixed-methods, probability and non-probability sampling techniques from two sample groups were utilised. The first sample group was for the quantitative research approach. This sampling group was made up of a total of 153 participants who completed the designed talent management Likert-type scale questionnaire. To identify the respondents from this sample, simple random sampling was employed, with each element having an opportunity to partake in the study (Brynard & Henekom, 2006). The sample composed of the head of departments (HODs), senior lecturers, lecturers, junior lecturers and academic administrative staff. This sample included permanent, temporary and fixed contract staff members.

The second study sample consisted of seven human resource experts. The sample was selected through purposeful sampling. Purposive sampling was utilised to collect knowledgeable data from individuals who were only familiar with the researched talent management aspects. This second sample group was interviewed by the researcher.

Research instruments

Questionnaire

This study utilised a Likert-type scale questionnaire to obtain quantitative data from 153 respondents. Prior to data collection, the study determined the questionnaire's reliability and validity to establish the consistency, trustworthiness and credibility of the data collection instrument. This was performed by means of a pilot study involving 15 non-participants. Furthermore, respondents self-completed the questionnaire in their own spare time. The questionnaire was considered as a data collection tool because it typically enables larger amounts of data to be collected in a reasonable amount of time and at a relatively low cost (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Kagee, 2006). Also, questionnaires facilitate the use and consideration of research ethical standards such as confidentiality and anonymity, which in turn aid in a large response rate (Bless et al., 2006).

The study questionnaire was split into two sections. The first section collected biographical data of the respondents. The second section consisted of six sub-sections that collected data about respondents' understanding of workforce planning, compensation and rewards, succession planning, recruitment and selection, performance management, training and development and talent retention. These sub-section themes were drawn from the literature review with 45 items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neutral, (4) disagree and (5) strongly disagree. The usefulness and efficacy of the Likert-type scale questionnaire have been used by many scholars (Buthelezi, 2010; Chikumbi, 2011) where they measured specific research problems. The study used the Likert-type scale questionnaire similarly developed and designed by various scholars (Buthelezi, 2010; Chikumbi, 2011) in their studies where they researched the very same topic of talent management, thus improving the validity of the research instruments for this investigation. However, the actual questionnaire utilised for this investigation was refined and further tailored to the study purpose. Moreover, a reliability test was conducted to measure internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Table 1 shows the coefficients of internal consistency from the statements in the questionnaire.

George and Mallery (2003), cited in Gliem and Gliem (2003) explained that a rule of thumb for a reliability coefficient is as follows: > 0.9 = excellent, > 0.8 = good, > 0.7 = acceptable, > 0.6 = questionable, > 0.5 = poor and < 0.5 = unacceptable.

TABLE 1: Internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha.

Number of items	Construct	Cronbach's alpha
7	Workforce planning	0.722
6	Compensation and rewards	0.868
8	Succession planning	0.854
7	Recruitment and selection	0.560
7	Performance management	0.702
5	Training and development	0.862
5	Talent retention	0.675

Therefore, from Table 1, the reliability of the items was satisfactory from the 45 items of the questionnaire (seven sub-sections) that were closely studied for their reliability.

Semi-structured interviews

To obtain qualitative data, the investigation utilised semi-structured interviews. This entailed personal interaction with seven human resource experts, who were asked a series of questions concerning talent management. The interviews included face-to-face engagement with every participant utilising an interview guide with 23 questions. Each interview session took around 40 min. Based on the foregoing information from the literature, research interview questions were formulated.

Prior to data collection, a pilot research was conducted involving two individuals via face-to-face semi-structured interviews utilising an interview guide. Thereafter, the researcher managed to obtain suggestions and constructive criticism. Relevant shortcomings in the data collecting instrument were identified and communicated to the researcher. Subsequently, revisions were performed for the true participants to assure that the interview questions were meaningful and also that participants accurately comprehended them.

Data analysis

Quantitatively, the investigation utilised Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyse the data through the assistance of a qualified and experienced statistician. Furthermore, the researcher utilised quantitative descriptive statistics that included the mean and standard deviation to produce item statistics. Averages of the items in each group were calculated to create new variables that represent the main categories.

Qualitatively, the data obtained was analysed by means of thematic analysis. This involved identifying and interpreting qualitative data collected using themes (Neuendorf, 2019). Relevant themes were assigned to the recorded and transcribed text in line with the objective of the study (Bazeley, 2013). All the interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and the interview answers were extracted by means of hand-coding using MS excel. This was enhanced by the use of notes to support interview recordings, therefore avoiding omission mistakes.

The researcher further validated the data by consolidating mixed methods used to generate a holistic assessment of the data analysed. As a result, the mixed methodologies utilised in this investigation were equally valuable, facilitating the synthesis of research data to analyse the phenomena of talent management in the selected South African institution.

Ethical considerations

All ethical considerations and procedures were adhered to throughout the study. These include permission to conduct the study, informed consent, voluntary participation, right to privacy, confidentiality and honesty in presenting data (2015FBREC288).

Results

Demographic information of quantitative data

As depicted in Table 2, the population consisted of 59.5% of academic staff who were permanently employed of which 47.7% were lecturers. The population consisted of 59.5% of academic staff who were permanently employed of which 47.7% were lecturers. Furthermore, 39.9% were of black descent and 19% were white, 30.1% mixed race and 11.1% were of Indian descent. The majority (51%) were from the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences. The majority of the participants (39.9%) were in the age group of 30–39 years followed by those between 40 and 49 years (34.0%), and between 20 and 29 years (10.5%). A total of 9.8% were participants between the ages 50 and 59 years

TABLE 2: Demographic information of quantitative data.

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	87	57
Female	66	43
Race		
Black	61	39.9
White	29	19.0
Mixed race	46	30.1
Indian	17	11.1
Age		
20–29	16	10.5
30–39	55	35.9
40–49	52	34.0
50–59	15	9.8
60 years and older	15	9.8
Qualification		
Diploma	2	1.3
Bachelor's degree	16	10.5
Honours degree	11	7.2
Master's degree	93	60.8
PhD	30	19.6
Others (please specify)	1	0.7
Employment		
Permanent employee	91	59.5
Fixed contract employee	50	32.7
Temporary employee	12	7.8
Number of years employed by the current employer		
0–3 years	55	35.9
4–6 years	29	19.0
7–10 years	36	23.5
More than 10 years	33	21.6
Faculty		
Faculty of Applied Sciences	6	3.9
Faculty of Business and Management Sciences	78	51.0
Faculty of Education and Social Sciences	18	11.8
Faculty of Engineering	21	13.7
Faculty of Informatics and Design	19	12.4
Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences	11	7.2
Position		
Junior Lecturer	39	25.5
Senior Lecturer	29	19.0
Lecturer	73	47.7
HOD	9	5.9
Admin staff	3	2.0

HOD, Head of the Department; PhD, Doctor of Philosophy.

and this was also the same for participants between the ages 60 years and older. The participants of the study were predominantly male (57%). A significant majority (60.8%) of participants indicated the master's degree as their highest level of qualification. A total of 35.9% of participants indicated that they had been employed between 0 and 3 years with the current employer, followed by 23.5% who indicated they had been employed between 7 and 10 years, followed by 21.6% who indicated that they had been employed for more than 10 years and 19.0% of the participants indicated that they had been employed between 4 and 6 years with the current employer. The findings here reveal that the majority of the study's participants were in their early phases of employment with their employer.

Qualitatively, the sample composed of seven human resource experts of which three were females and four were males. With regard to ethnicity, the sample was distributed as follows: 6 = black and 1 = mixed race. In terms of tenure, one participant had the shortest tenure (5 months) whilst other participants ranged from 1 to 11 years of employment with the investigated university. In terms of academic qualifications, two participants had MCom in Industrial Psychology and MPhil Labour Law as their highest level of qualifications whereas other participants had various academic qualifications such as National Diploma, B.Tech degree, Honours degree and postgraduate degree.

TABLE 3: Correlation analysis of the variables.

Spearman's rho	Spearman Correlations					
	WP	CR	SP	RS	PM	TD
CR						
Correlation Coefficient	0.073	-	-	-	-	-
<i>p</i> (2-tailed)	0.369	-	-	-	-	-
<i>N</i>	153	-	-	-	-	-
SP						
Correlation Coefficient	0.189*	0.537**	-	-	-	-
<i>p</i> (2-tailed)	0.019	< 0.001	-	-	-	-
<i>N</i>	153	153	-	-	-	-
RS						
Correlation Coefficient	0.331**	-0.247**	-0.463**	-	-	-
<i>p</i> (2-tailed)	0.01	0.002	0.01	-	-	-
<i>N</i>	153	153	153	-	-	-
PM						
Correlation Coefficient	0.366**	-0.152	-0.163*	0.324**	-	-
<i>p</i> (2-tailed)	0.01	0.060	0.044	0.01	-	-
<i>N</i>	153	153	153	153	-	-
TD						
Correlation Coefficient	0.596**	-0.304**	-0.236**	0.555**	0.582**	-
<i>p</i> (2-tailed)	0.01	0.01	0.003	0.01	0.01	-
<i>N</i>	153	153	153	153	153	-
TR						
Correlation Coefficient	0.293**	0.619**	0.409**	0.007	0.036	-0.053
<i>p</i> (2-tailed)	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.936	0.662	0.516
<i>N</i>	153	153	153	153	153	153

WP, workforce planning; CR, compensation and rewards; SP, succession planning; RS, recruitment and selection; PM, performance management; TD, training and development; TR, talent retention.

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations

In this study, the researcher analysed variables to understand and uncover the relationship between pairs of variables in a statistical context. Although there are several techniques that researchers can use such as the Pearson's correlation, the researcher used Spearman's rho, which is denoted by the Greek letter ρ to analyse the correlations because the pairs of variables were ordinal. The computed values of Spearman's rho vary between 0 and 1 and can either be negative or positive (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In addition, Spearman's rho uses co-variables, not independent variables and dependent variables. It is also worth noting that correlations do not indicate causality, rather, they show the strength of a linear relationship. Table 3 shows the correlations for variables in this study.

A Spearman correlation was computed using SPSS to determine if there were any significant relationships between two constructs. From Table 3, it can be interpreted that a significant positive and strong relationship ($RS = 0.619$) exists between compensation and rewards (CRs) and talent retention (TR). This correlation is statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Therefore, when compensation and rewards are increased, an individual will likely stay in the organisation, which result in increased talent retention. A significant strong negative Spearman correlation exist between RS and SP ($RS = -0.463$). This correlation is statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Therefore, when RS is increased, SP decreases. There is also no significant relationship between CR and WP ($RS = 0.073$). It means that compensation and rewards and workforce planning are not related.

Table 4 shows a summary of statistics where it presents the means and standard deviations of the main categories of the research questionnaire, namely workforce planning (WP), compensation and rewards (CR), succession planning (SP), recruitment and selection (RS), performance management (PM), training and development (TD) and talent retention (TR).

Discussion

Theme 1: Workforce planning

With regard to workforce planning, seven items relating to workforce planning for talent management were included in this theme. A general pattern can be observed where frequencies moved from 'strongly agreed' to 'strongly disagreed'. Table 4 provides a group mean and standard deviation workforce planning. An aggregate average mean score of 2.90 as indicated reveals that workforce planning has

been managed fairly by the institution despite having some gaps in the whole management of workforce planning. This is because it scored a low average mean slightly below the neutral point of 3.0 and a standard deviation of 0.703. On average, the participants perceived positive and relatively fair management of workforce planning practices. However, it can be pointed out that the institution lacks a retention plan for skilled staff. Also, there are no discussions in boardroom meetings about identification and retention of talent and finally, the institution needs to get rid of the current workforce planning traditional practises because they have proven to be ineffective. These findings are consistent and are further integrated with findings made in qualitative data. As per qualitative data, the majority of participants (five out of seven) claimed that the university does not possess a retention plan, which supports the quantitative findings. Apart from that, another quantitative finding is supported by a qualitative finding. Specifically, some participants mentioned that they were not generally aware of a structured procedure and that the institutions lack a model for workforce planning. As explained by the participants:

'I am not aware of a formalised process. Currently, it is carried out on an ad hoc basis ...' (Participant 5, male, black, HR expert, MCom Industrial Psychology, 11 years of work experience at the investigated university)

'[...]here is no uniformity, it varies from department to department. Some departments are proactive to plan ahead. For some it's just filling in roles when a vacant position comes. So, we do not have a model we are failing with that regard ...' (Participant 7, male, black, HR expert, National Diploma in Human Resource Management, 3 years of work experience at the investigated university)

Based on comments from participants 5 and 7, it emerges that there is no consistency and universal applicability of policies across all departments when it comes to workforce planning, and it is only carried out for particular purposes at times.

Furthermore, participants 1, 2 and 6 mentioned that the Institutional Planning Office conduct workforce planning. They then advise human resource experts on how to implement those plans. However, this result contradicts the argument in the literature review, which stated that the duty for workforce planning falls with human resource practitioners, who take the lead throughout the process whilst collaborating with frontline supervisors (Warnich et al., 2015). According to Van Zyl et al. (2017), multiple stakeholders, including frontline supervisors, employees, senior management and human resource experts, should be

TABLE 4: Means and standard deviations for workforce planning, compensation and rewards, succession planning, recruitment and selection, performance management, training and development and talent retention.

Statistics	Group statistics						
	Workforce planning	Compensation and rewards	Succession planning	Recruitment and selection	Performance management	Training and development	Talent retention
N							
Valid	153	153	153	153	153	153	153
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	2.90	3.62	3.79	2.65	2.47	2.21	3.25
Standard deviation	0.703	0.955	0.847	0.620	0.747	0.896	0.902

included in the design, planning and implementation of talent management initiatives.

Theme 2: Compensation and rewards

Findings from the compensation and rewards management theme revealed a consensus amongst the participants as they perceived their employer's compensation and rewards as unsatisfactory. Whilst this study complements and correlates with other previous reports and studies (Industrial Action Report, 2016; Theron et al., 2014), the study's findings contrast with the findings of Nkomentaba (2014) on compensation and rewards. According to Table 4, compensation and rewards scored a group score of 3.62 on average mean and 0.955 on standard deviation. This means that there is a negative perception of compensation and rewards as indicated by the average mean that is above 3.0. As a result, as explained earlier in the literature, rewards are the primary source of interface between the employer and the employee, a poor negative perception indicates that employees are dissatisfied with their rewards, which can be cited as the primary cause for employees leaving the institution as supported by other scholars (Nkomentaba, 2014). However, in this study, it was found that the majority of academics (58.1%) are not looking forward to leaving their institution despite indicating dissatisfaction with their compensation and rewards packages. The talent retention theme that follows expands on and gives more information about talent retention, with a focus on compensation and rewards.

In addition, a significant majority (57.5%) of the participants disagreed that their compensation packages are competitive when related to the labour market. However, as per qualitative data, the participants positively indicated that the institution's compensation packages are competitive when linked to the labour market. The participants (human resource experts) validated their responses with more substantial information thereby eliminating gaps left in the Likert-type scale questionnaire. To be specific, the participants had this to say:

'We do compare each year's salaries using the REMchannel. Our institution participates in surveys of salaries via REMchannel ... our institution's salary packages are competitive because right now I have a report that I received recently that indicates in terms of where we are in terms of competitiveness.' (Participant 1, male, black, HR expert, MPhil: Labour Law, 1 year of work experience at the investigated university)

'Well competitively we are. When you compare this university's, competitiveness using the REMchannel, you see that we are to a certain extent competitive against some local universities ...' (Participant 5, male, black, HR expert, MCom in Industrial Psychology, 11 years of work experience at the investigated university)

Theme 3: Succession planning

The research findings show that succession planning items were consistently negative throughout the whole eight statements. Descriptive statistics were generally high and ranged between 3.46 on the average mean and 4.05 whilst standard deviation scored between 0.985 and 1.428

(see Table 4). This indicates that the organisation is not doing well with succession planning practices. The institution is facing challenges in facilitating the transition of junior-level employees to senior positions when senior members are leaving the organisation. This contrasts with what the organisation is ought to be doing as discussed in the literature where the organisation is supposed to be developing high potential employees within the organisation with the idea to ensure continuity, avoidance of transitional challenges when experienced leaders leave the organisation and in doing so help to reduce cases associated with the early promotion (Hills, 2009; Warnich et al., 2015).

Participants 1, 5 and 7 reported that the university uses external programmes. These programmes are part of the Department of Higher Education and Training's (DHET) attempts to recruit skilled scholars to replace ageing employees (DHET, 2018). However, participants 2, 3 and 6, on the other hand, responded no succession planning is taking place because the organisation lacks institutional succession planning initiatives. As a result, participants pointed out that the institution suffers replacement issues when top staff retire. This is because of the institution's inability to fill posts left vacant by senior members. Responding to these issues, participant 1 said this:

'We don't have succession planning policy or structured plan for the institution, hence we heavily rely on those two programmes, Khula and New Generation of Academics Programmes as I have mentioned earlier.' (Participant 1, male, black, HR expert, MPhil: Labour Law, 1 year of work experience at the investigated university)

Therefore, the study argues that succession planning is poorly managed by the institution and there are talent management problems. This is because of a lack of an internal succession planning system and a policy.

Theme 4: Recruitment and selection

The overall remark that can be drawn from the Likert-type scale questionnaire findings for recruiting and selection is that the participants agreed with five out of seven items. Descriptive statistics show a low but positive aggregate average mean score of 2.65 and a standard deviation of 0.620 as presented in Table 4. Five out of seven items recorded a positive response whilst two items were negatively perceived by the participants. In general, this indicates that the participants had a high positive perception of the application of recruitment and selection practices by their employer.

As observed earlier in the literature, for recruitment and selection activities to be effective, these activities should be guided by written policies and procedures (Kleynhans, 2006) whilst the organisation puts a lot of factors into consideration when choosing the best candidates to fill vacancies (Louw, 2013). Therefore, based on the findings, this is what the institution is doing. Furthermore, the findings of this study support the work of various scholars (Kanyemba, 2014;

Louw, 2013) on what they found in their studies about recruitment and selection practises despite participants indicating some negative responses in two areas.

Despite some concerns, the participants pointed out that the existing process of finding potential talent in the institution is impactful and effective. According to the participants, the strategies of recruiting and selecting employees enable crucial activities to be performed. Furthermore, as mentioned by participant 6, the recruiting and selection procedure complies with the *Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995*:

‘It is effective because it follows and conforms to Labour Relations legislation. It is also effective because we advertise positions in the right channels and people go through the selection process and we also make appointments ...’ (Participant 6, female, black, HR expert, B. Tech: Human Resource Development, 6 years of work experience at the investigated university)

However, other participants claimed that efficacy is determined by the speciality of the post to be replaced. This suggests that when a position demands a scarce expertise, it will be difficult to recruit new staff than it does for a regular lecturing position. Participant 5 recounted:

‘It varies with the discipline, for example, in engineering countrywide it is a scarce skill. The few scarce skills that are there at the market are targeted by everyone. So, sometimes through these traditional ways of advertising sometimes you don’t get the people, and, in that way, we don’t have a targeted way of sourcing candidates where you go and source candidates and convince them to apply ...’ (Participant 5, male, black, HR expert, MCom Industrial Psychology, 11 years of work experience at the investigated university)

The study also discovered that the institution’s recruiting and selection procedure is overly protracted. The SENEX Committee, which convenes monthly to review and approve final nominations, adds to the length of time it takes to fill academic jobs. As a consequence, four participants agreed that owing to delays, some candidates do not accept offers from the institution because of a lack of patience caused by the institution’s bureaucracy in finalising the recruitment and selection processes.

Another issue discovered was the institution’s failure to attract South African nationalities, which compels the university to recruit scholars from other nations. Furthermore, it was discovered that the university is not completely adopting technology, preferring to rely on old ways such as paperwork.

Theme 5: Performance management

In terms of performance management, the vast majority of respondents in this theme supported literature (Hunter, 2012; Louw-Potgieter, 2012) and are also similar to past research study findings (Aguinis, 2013; Paile, 2012). However, findings were also in contrast with the work of Maimela and Samuel (2016), Pienaar and Bester (2008). Seven items were included in this theme. Despite recording one negative average mean score of 3.16, all the items were consistently positive. Group

average mean of 2.47 as presented in Table 4 indicated a positive result in the performance management practises by the institution.

Based on qualitative data, the participants did not provide any positive information on the institution’s performance management strategies. They expressed several issues. Three participants concurred that the university lacks a performance management policy. Participants 4 and 7 recounted:

‘We are very weak in that area because at this stage even the performance management policy has not yet been adopted, it’s still work in progress. The managers also do not know how to conduct performance management in their respective departments although there have been workshops arranged by the Learning and Development Department to encourage the line managers to attend these workshops, still, these line managers do not attend.’ (Participant 7, male, black, HR expert, National Diploma in Human Resource Management, 3 years of work experience at the investigated university)

Upon reconciling quantitative research findings of performance management using qualitative findings, it is clear there is a partial performance management at the university, lack of performance management policy guidelines, lack of managerial skills to conduct performance management and non-uniformity of application of performance management practices.

Theme 6: Training and development

Overall, the majority of participants responded positively to the training and development findings. They ‘strongly agreed’ with the statements on the Likert-type scale questionnaire. The pattern was generally consistent throughout five items with a positive group score of 2.21 on the aggregate average mean score (Table 4). As discussed in the literature that the business environment is ever-changing, a continuous investment in training and development then becomes important. This is because of the fact that it leads to the enhancement of essential capabilities of academic staff, allowing them to maintain relevant skills in accordance with the present and future demands of higher education (Buthelezi, 2010).

Qualitatively, the overall remark is that the majority of participants reported doing little in terms of training and development. As recounted by Participants 1 and 2:

‘Training and Development is not performed by Human Capital.’ (Participant 1, male, black, HR expert, MPhil: Labour Law, 1 year of work experience at the investigated university)

‘As Business Partners we are just partially involved. The full responsibility lies with the Learning and Development Department.’ (Participant 2, female, black, HR expert, BCom: Industrial Psychology, 9 years of work experience at the investigated university)

Theme 7: Talent retention

In terms of talent retention, the participants in this study appeared to be slightly dissatisfied with the management of

some of the talent retention factors (work environment, professional work development and advancement opportunities and compensation packages). The general agreement from the participants is that these factors are poorly managed whereby they all recorded negative average scores. It must be observed that all these three statements that participants highlighted negatively are factors that could encourage employees to leave if not addressed properly (Robyn & Du Preez, 2013; Theron et al., 2014). On the other hand, participants positively indicated that their jobs offer them reasonable and fair work-life balance options and opportunities, which are consistent with the previous studies (Makhuzeni & Barkhuizen, 2015). Interestingly, this study found that a significant majority (63.4%) disagreed that they are currently not looking for other jobs with similar compensation packages. These results indicate that majority of academics are not looking forward to leaving their university despite indicating dissatisfaction with their compensation and rewards packages. This study could not further establish the reasons why employees are choosing to stay in their workplace yet not satisfied with their compensation packages as also acknowledged by other previous scholars (Kontoghiorges & Frangou, 2009). In this regard, the participants' consensus is that the institution is poorly managing certain factors that could encourage employees to leave as indicated by a negative aggregate group mean score of 3.25 as shown in Table 4. However, using qualitative research findings, it appears like the institution is fairly doing well in managing employee retention given a lower turnover rate of 1.2% despite not

having a separate retention strategy. To be specific, Participant 1 in qualitative research was asked to explain some of the strategies in place to retain experienced workers and this is what the participant had to say:

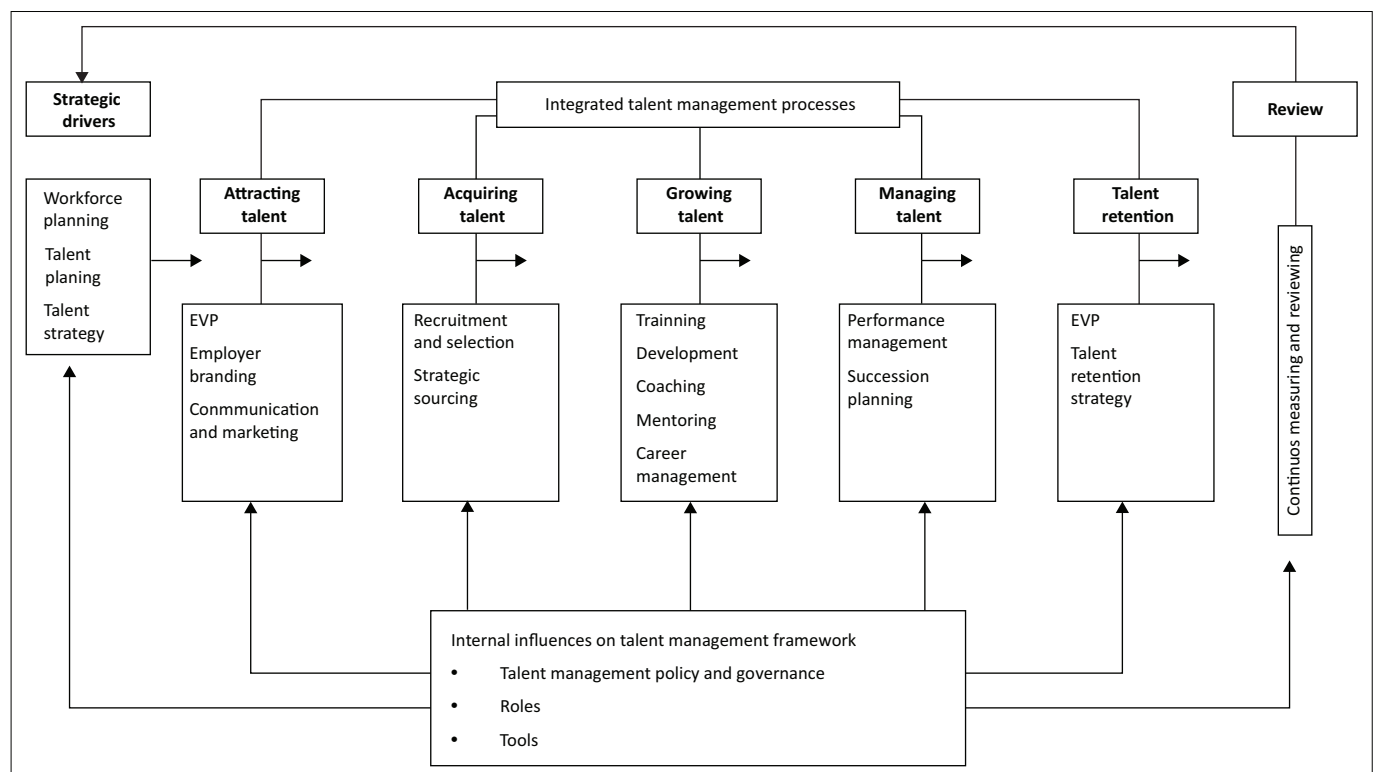
'[...]The only strategy we have now to ensure that we retain our key employees is through employee value proposition in terms of the institution's benefits, salary packages, promotion and others although we do not have a separate retention strategy that will probably incorporate all these bits and pieces that we are doing in terms of the value proposition. I think our value proposition is working as indicated by our turnover rate, which is at 1.2% for this period.' (Participant 1, male, black, HR expert, MPhil: Labour Law, 1 year of work experience at the investigated university)

The proposed framework for talent management in the higher education sector

The research themes that emerged: workforce planning, compensation and rewards, recruitment and selection, performance management, succession planning, training and development and talent retention demonstrated the need for a strategic approach to attract academics whilst retaining the best to ensure that the selected South African university achieves its vision and mission as shown in Figure 2.

Practical implications

In South African universities, there have been few studies on the comprehensive talent management system, although previous studies tried to explore some of the elements that form talent management. The study embraced mixed-methods



EVP, employee value proposition.

FIGURE 2: A framework for talent management in the higher education sector.

that contributed to the existing talent management literature in a more in-depth way. The research results have implications for talent management practices in South African universities. Human resource professionals and talent managers in South African universities can use the study's findings to improve talent management practices in their institutions, which significantly lead to sustainable competitive advantage. This study provides human resource practitioners with a talent management framework to attract and retain talent in the higher education sector. The proposed framework practically guides talent management practices within South African universities by highlighting activities to better attract and retain academic staff efficiently and effectively.

Conclusion

This study set out to develop a talent management framework for the South African higher education sector that would enable South African universities to attract and retain academic staff. It provides new insights into the talent management practices of South African universities. A framework for talent management in the higher education sector was developed, which practically guides human resources practitioners on talent management practices within South African universities. It highlighted activities to better attract and retain academic staff efficiently and effectively. This is crucial because it incorporates efficient strategies for attracting and retaining talent, which may considerably enhance universities' capacity to manage the difficulties of an ageing population.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

Because just one South African public university was investigated, the research findings cannot be regarded as reflective of the entire population (all 26 South African public universities). As a result, the study suggests that when the proposed talent management framework is to be utilised at other institutions, it must be modified to match the institution's talent management requirements.

Future studies should be carried out on a larger scale by including other several South African universities. If further studies are to be carried out, a new model, methods or processes in talent management practices may be adopted for South African universities or other universities in the global fraternity.

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Author's contributions

R.N.M. acted as the primary researcher of this study who formed part of his master's research.

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Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

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