

TALENT MANAGEMENT AT A HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION IN KUWAIT:

A CASE STUDY APPROACH

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Thesis Abstract

The higher education sector in Kuwait faces unique challenges in talent management impacting the attraction, development, and retention of skilled professionals. The purpose of this study is to investigate the talent management practices employed at a higher educational institute in Kuwait. Data collection involves in-depth, one-on-one interviews with twenty-five participants, using open-ended questions to gather detailed insights. The interviews are analysed using the NVivo™ version fourteen software. Key themes and findings include the influence of institutional vision and policies on talent management practices, internal and external factors facilitating and restraining talent management policy implementation, processes and criteria used to identify, develop, and retain talent, and the perceptions and contributions of stakeholders within the organisation. The findings reveal substantial challenges related to workforce diversity and professional development opportunities in regional higher educational institutes. However, clear human resources policies, effective communication, robust performance management systems, and strong leadership support emerged as critical enablers for successful talent management practices. This study highlights the need for clear talent management guidelines aligned with organisational goals, top management commitment, and effective mentorship programmes to overcome these challenges. For industry practitioners and leaders, the research emphasises the importance of confronting systemic biases, enhancing diversity and inclusion initiatives, and fostering a supportive, inclusive organisational culture. Future research should include comparative studies across multiple higher educational institutions within Kuwait and the Gulf Cooperation Council region, longitudinal investigations to capture the dynamics of talent management practices over time and expanding the participant pool to include more diverse groups, such as administrators, faculty, and students. This study contributes to the broader discourse on talent management in higher education, offering insights that could help Kuwaiti institutions improve their talent management strategies and ultimately enhance their academic and administrative capacities.

Keywords: Education, Higher Educational Institutions, Kuwait, Talent Management

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List of Abbreviations

AOU	Arab Open University
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BHCK	Box Hill College of Kuwait
CM	Change Management
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GUST	Gulf University of Science and Technology
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Educational Institution
HEIs	Higher Educational Institutions
HoDs	Head of Departments
HR	Human Resources
HRIS	Human Resources Information Systems
HRM	Human Resource Management
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IR	Integrated Reporting
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
KU	Kuwait University
MNEs	Multinational Enterprises
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
PAAET	Public Authority for Applied Education and Training
PD	Professional Development
PM	Performance Management
PUC	Private Universities Council
RBV	Resource-Based View
R&D	Research & Development
ROI	Return on Investment
TD	Talent Development
TM	Talent Management
ToR	Terms of Reference

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction to the Chapter

Navigating the effervescent corridors of University XYZ, I find myself perpetually surrounded by an atmosphere of diversity and dynamism. This institution, a paragon of Higher Education (HE) within Kuwait, is clearly navigating through a critical period characterised by transformation and innovation. Given the implementation of novel legislative frameworks and the imperatives of the Kuwaitisation agenda, the indispensability of sophisticated Talent Management (TM) strategies has never been more pronounced.

In my observation of the day-to-day operations and interpersonal dynamics within our institution, I have identified several persistent challenges that impede the university's forward momentum in certain areas. The difficulties in attracting, retaining, and nurturing academic talent stand out as critical barriers to creating an atmosphere that promotes innovation and excellence. These observations have deeply motivated me to delve into and comprehend the complexities of academic TM within the HE setting, mainly focusing on the context of Kuwait.

Considering Kuwait's ambitions to expand and enhance its educational landscape, it is imperative to examine how TM practices can be optimised to support this growth. The recent enactment of new laws and the emphasis on Kuwaitisation present both opportunities and challenges for higher educational institutions (HEIs) in the region.

This chapter sets out the rationale for this research and its context. It also presents the background of the problem and the problem statement. The population and sample size are thoroughly provided, along with the research questions that this thesis aims to explore and address.

1.1 Background of the Problem

1.1.1 The Importance of Talent Management

In today's globalised world, organisations face intense competition, making it essential to attract and retain top talent to sustain and improve their market position. Human capital is widely recognised as the key to organisational success, with exceptional talent serving as a vital competitive edge (Lynch, 2007; Lawler & Ulrich, 2008; Mohammed et al., 2018). Consequently, TM has become a crucial aspect of human resources (HR) strategies in various sectors. The growing body of TM research highlights its critical role in driving organisational success (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016; Ghomi & Ahmadi, 2018).

1.1.2 Talent Management in Higher Educational Institutions

The trends influencing TM are also evident in HE. Universities are pivotal in producing and sharing knowledge that contributes to economic development both locally and globally. As key societal institutions, they provide essential services to the community. Despite this, many HEIs have yet to establish

effective TM practices to support their workforce (Festing & Schäfer, 2014). The competition for skilled employees extends beyond academia, with various industries competing for top talent. Recent studies reveal a persistent global shortage of highly qualified members in certain academic fields (Dadvand et al., 2024; Wojcik, 2017).

1.1.3 Talent Management Challenges and Trends in Kuwait

Kuwait's HE sector has undergone significant growth in recent decades, especially in the recruitment of academic talent (Tamah Al-Shammari, 2023; Chambers et al., 1998). As Kuwait and other nations expand their HE systems, attracting, supporting, and retaining qualified administrators becomes increasingly urgent (Austin et al., 2014). Situated in the Middle East and a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Kuwait has been actively recruiting faculty to meet the needs of its growing HE sector. This research focuses on University XYZ in Kuwait and examines its TM practices. Effectively managing talent is a challenge faced globally (Meyers et al., 2013). The complexities introduced by globalisation and increased human mobility have impacted international work assignments (Froese, 2012). Globalisation has also influenced universities and other organisations (Namazie & Venegas, 2016), prompting many individuals to seek employment opportunities abroad (Richardson & McKenna, 2002). The global labour market now allows highly qualified professionals to work in countries of their choice (Musselin, 2005). Kuwait's workforce comprises over 100 nationalities (The Central Agency for Information Technology, 2024). To achieve long-term growth and sustainability, Kuwait's vision emphasises the importance of fostering a talent-driven culture, as per their Kuwait Vision 2035 (New Kuwait, 2024). HEIs in Kuwait must focus not only on attracting top talent but also engaging and retaining their existing talent.

1.1.4 Research Gaps and Motivations

TM is the strategic exercise of managing HR in organisations and is the efficient and effective acquisition, development, deployment, and retention of the 'talent,' defined as the knowledge, skills, abilities, and aptitude of the workforce (Tansley, 2011; Collings et al., 2019). Collings et al. (2019) state that TM is not just finding the right person for the right job at the right time but also creating optimum structures and conditions under which talents are appropriately managed so that individuals in the organisation can realise their full potential. It covers the identification of potential and future development of such capabilities, together with their linking to organisational goals (Garavan et al., 2019a).

Globally, the significance of TM is well-documented across various sectors, with North America and Europe leading in empirical research and practical frameworks. Mujtaba & Mubarik (2021) identified TM as a critical enabler of institutional performance, with practices tailored to organisational strategies proving more sustainable than generic approaches. Studies by Tarique and Schuler (2010) demonstrate that lessons from other industries, such as healthcare or IT, often inform innovations in academia. Consequently, while the global discourse on TM is rich, it needs to be more evenly distributed, with limited exploration of the region-specific challenges in developing economies, including the Middle East (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014).

In the Middle East, TM practices are often characterised by irregular implementation, reflecting broader organisational challenges such as hierarchical structures, inadequate strategic planning, and cultural norms that may hinder innovation (Al-Azzam & Al-Qura'an, 2018; Alshehri et al., 2024). In Saudi Arabia, the TM in the oil and gas sector needs more training and adequate appraisal systems (Alshehri et al., 2024). Similarly, the use of TM in UAE public sector organisations reveals a need for greater alignment between strategic goals and operational execution (Al Bedwawi et al., 2023). These studies suggest that while TM challenges in the corporate sphere are significant, public organisations, including HEIs, face similar hurdles.

Although Middle Eastern studies provide valuable insights, many still need to address the unique cultural, economic, and institutional landscape of Kuwait. Unlike resource-rich economies similar to Saudi Arabia or the UAE, Kuwait's HE sector grapples with challenges such as the Kuwaitisation agenda, which prioritises local talent over expatriates, and the global competition for highly skilled academic professionals. Additionally, regulatory frameworks in Kuwait often differ from those of neighbouring countries, requiring tailored TM strategies.

While Alshehri et al. (2024) focuses on corporate TM in Saudi Arabia, the context of HEIs in Kuwait demands a focus on research capacity, faculty retention, and institutional autonomy. Furthermore, University XYZ, the focus of this study, represents a microcosm of these challenges as it navigates national policies, limited resources, and the need to attract global talent amidst growing competition.

This research contributes by bridging the global and regional discourse on TM, focusing on the specific context of University XYZ. By examining the misalignments between institutional goals and TM practices, this study addresses the gaps highlighted in broader Middle Eastern literature and adapts them to Kuwait's unique environment. It explores whether lessons from global and regional TM strategies are transferrable to Kuwait and identifies the adjustments required to ensure their efficacy in this context.

1.2 Problem Statement

This thesis will evidence that the HE in Kuwait faces distinctive challenges and opportunities in TM, which profoundly affects its ability to attract, develop, and retain talented professionals (Smith, 2021). The cultural, organisational, and policy nuances of Kuwait add layers of complexity to the implementation of TM practices, underscoring the imperative for an in-depth exploration to navigate and mitigate these intricacies adeptly.

Kuwait's deeply rooted cultural values (to be explored further in Chapter Two) influence organisational behaviour and employee expectations. Understanding these cultural nuances is essential for developing TM practices that resonate with local administrators, faculty, and students. Additionally, Kuwait's Vision 2035 emphasises transitioning to a knowledge-based economy, necessitating a robust HE system that can produce a skilled and innovative workforce (New Kuwait, 2024). Aligning TM practices with this vision is

crucial for national development. Furthermore, the Kuwaitisation policy, a government initiative aiming to increase the participation of Kuwaiti nationals in the workforce, presents opportunities for local talent development (TD) while challenging HEIs to balance this with the need for diverse and international expertise. If a university located in Kuwait wishes to follow the Kuwaitisation policy, it may also consider modifying its TM policies to suit the local talent and diverse expatriates.

This research is critical for several reasons: First, while global discussions emphasise the importance of effective TM, there needs to be a greater understanding of the gap in how these practices are implemented and perceived within Kuwaiti HEIs (Al et al., 2016). This research aims to fill that gap by providing a detailed analysis of TM in the Kuwaiti context. Second, aligning TM strategies with institutional goals is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge, as highlighted by recent studies (Sparrow, 2022). However, unique cultural, organisational, and policy-related factors in the Kuwaiti HE often complicate this alignment. Third, understanding the dynamics of TM within Kuwaiti HEIs can inform both institutional practices and government policies, leading to more effective strategies for attracting, developing, and retaining academic talent.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of TM practices within Kuwaiti HEIs through the lens of University XYZ, this study investigates the perspectives of various key stakeholders that are related to this study. These stakeholders include administrators, faculty, and students; by examining how leadership styles and strategic visions influence TM practices and align with institutional goals, this study aims to uncover the critical factors involved in shaping and implementing effective TM strategies.

The study focuses on several key areas. First, it will explore how the institution's vision and policies influence TM practices and outcomes. This includes an analysis of internal organisational factors, such as culture and leadership, that shape TM strategies. Additionally, this study will consider the impact of external influences, including government policies and global educational trends, on TM practices within Kuwaiti HEIs. The role of various stakeholders in shaping and implementing these practices will also be examined to provide a holistic understanding of the TM landscape.

Understanding these dynamics is crucial for identifying the current state of TM in Kuwaiti HE. According to a 2023 report by the Gulf Research Centre, regional HEIs face significant challenges related to workforce diversity and professional development (PD) opportunities. This study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of these challenges and offer actionable recommendations for fostering a competitive and capable academic workforce.

By exploring these aspects, this study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on TM in HE. This study will offer insights that could help Kuwaiti institutions improve their TM strategies and ultimately enhance their academic and administrative capacities. Through a detailed examination of the factors influencing TM practices, this research aspires to inform policy and practice, thereby supporting the development of a robust and effective TM framework within Kuwaiti HEIs.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the TM practices used at an HEI in Kuwait, with a particular focus on how the unique institutional and cultural context of the Kuwaiti HE sector shapes these practices. This research offers a detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of these practices in enhancing institutional performance and achieving strategic objectives. This study is an exploration of the processes and criteria used to attract, engage, and retain faculty, including the role of institutional vision and policies, recruitment methods, and support systems designed to sustain academic talent.

What sets this study apart is its integration of stakeholder and institutional theories to provide a robust analytical framework. These theories help uncover how internal and external factors such as organisational culture, leadership, regulatory pressures, and societal expectations interact to shape TM practices in this specific context. By applying this dual-theoretical lens, this research highlights how broader cultural and institutional forces in Kuwait influence the design and implementation of TM strategies, revealing distinctive challenges and opportunities that differentiate the Kuwaiti HE sector from other regions.

This study also examines the perceptions of key organisational stakeholders, including faculty and administrative staff, to understand their role in shaping and responding to TM practices by assessing both the impact of these practices on academic performance, satisfaction, and the organisational processes driving TM. Additionally, this research provides insights into best practices and areas for improvement. Ultimately, the findings in this study aim to contribute to the development of more effective, context-specific TM strategies that align with the needs of Kuwaiti HEIs and support their broader educational and societal goals.

1.4 Population and Sample

The population for this study consists of administrators, faculty, and students at University XYZ in Kuwait. To gain a well-rounded understanding of the institution's TM practices, a representative group of participants is selected through purposive sampling¹ (Ames et al., 2019). This approach ensures that the sample reflects the diversity within the academic community at University XYZ by offering a comprehensive perspective on the TM strategies in place (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). This sample includes not only administrators but also faculty and students. Including students provides insights into their perceptions of the quality of teaching and faculty support, as explored in Chapter Six. In addition, administrators offer perspectives on the implementation and effectiveness of TM practices from an operational standpoint. This multi-dimensional approach allows for a holistic analysis of TM practices at University XYZ. Purposive sampling selects participants with diverse experiences and backgrounds, ensuring representation across different academic disciplines, levels of experience, and cultural backgrounds (Liu et al., 2024). This diversity is crucial for capturing a wide range of insights and experiences related to TM practices.

¹Purposive sampling is an intentional selection of informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept, or phenomenon (Robinson, 2014).

Participants are chosen based on their position and experience at University XYZ, ensuring they provide informed perspectives on the TM practices and their effects. Faculty members involved in recruitment, retention, and management processes are integral to this study, just as are students who have substantial interactions with administrators and faculty responsible for TM policies.

1.5 Significance of this Study

This section highlights the theoretical and practical contributions by showing its relevance and importance in TM within Kuwaiti HEIs. The study's significance is divided into two subsections: Contributions to Theory and Contributions to Practice.

1.5.1 Contributions to Theory

This study advances knowledge in the field by integrating and expanding on stakeholder theory and institutional theory, offering structured frameworks to examine TM practices within the specific context of University XYZ. These theories help explain how external influences and stakeholder dynamics shape TM practices and their implementation in organisations. While the findings of this research are grounded in the unique environment of University XYZ, they provide valuable insights that can shape TM practices in similar settings. This study aims to highlight context-specific challenges and strategies that could be adapted and further explored in other institutions within the region. By focusing on University XYZ, this research establishes a foundation for future studies to investigate TM practices in a broader spectrum of Kuwaiti HEIs.

This research uniquely contextualises the role of various stakeholders, such as government bodies, university administrators, faculty members, and students in shaping TM strategies within the HE sectors. Stakeholder theory has been applied in various organisational contexts, but its application to TM within HEIs is underexplored, particularly in the Middle East. This study extends the use of stakeholder theory by examining how institutional pressures and competing stakeholder priorities interact, providing an understanding of how external pressures and conflicting demands impact decision-making in TM. By situating these dynamics within the specific TM domain of Kuwaiti HEIs, this research advances stakeholder theory's applicability to HE and proposes its broader integration into TM studies.

Furthermore, institutional theory is employed to explore how organisational behaviours in University XYZ respond to external forces, including policies, cultural influences, and global academic standards. While institutional theory has been widely used to study organisational practices, its combined application with stakeholder theory in the context of TM will be explored. This study demonstrates how external factors, such as regulatory frameworks and global competition, interact with internal organisational culture to shape TM practices. The integration of these two theories provides a comprehensive framework to examine how Kuwaiti HEIs navigate external pressures to sustain their legitimacy while striving for organisational

efficiency. This dual-theoretical approach offers a new lens for understanding TM within HEIs in the Middle East, addressing gaps in the literature and paving the way for future research in similar contexts.

As the literature review will show, existing literature has mainly concentrated on TM in the Western world or in corporate settings. Thus, literature needs to be examined to identify the dynamics of TM in Middle Eastern HEIs. Therefore, the context chosen for this research helps establish how the practice of TM is embedded in a culturally and institutionally distinct context. This enhances the literature by introducing an often-overlooked geographical area and providing an analysis of TM's difficulties and benefits.

1.5.2 Contributions to Practice

The findings of this study will provide practical recommendations towards improving TM practices for HR practitioners, policymakers, and institutional managers within Kuwaiti HEIs. The findings can help inform practice and policy in terms of strategic vision and improvements within the HE sector.

This study identifies key challenges and opportunities in TM and provides recommendations for the further evolution of effective HR management strategies in the field. This study is valuable for identifying the potential for the development of context-specific intervention approaches in specific institutional settings, the introduction of proven tools such as the performance appraisal system, and the formation of relevant PD programmes.

This study offers policy insights for implementing educational policies aligned with Kuwaitisation. It shows how effective TM can help build a skilled academic workforce, aligning institutional goals with national educational and economic priorities to foster innovation, enhance education quality, and boost global competitiveness.

For university administrators, this study highlights how robust TM practices can enhance institutional reputation by attracting top-tier academic talent and improving faculty retention. Institutions with robust TM frameworks are better positioned to achieve higher rankings, attract international partnerships, and secure funding opportunities, ultimately benefiting both the institution and its stakeholders.

This study advocates for the promotion of a favourable climate aimed at supporting the welfare and PD of the members of the academic staff of universities. This includes addressing challenges such as limited career advancement opportunities and improving work-life balance initiatives. By doing so, institutions can ensure long-term commitment from faculty members, contributing to their sustainability and success.

Although this study is focused on Kuwaiti HEIs, the findings are relevant to similar contexts across the Middle East. Thus, this study provides recommendations on how to address typical regional difficulties in TM development, including talent deficiencies and resource limitations, and can be utilised as a reference for other HEIs in the region aspiring to enhance their TM performance.

1.6 Nature of the Study

This research adopts a qualitative approach, utilising a case study methodology to explore the TM practices at University XYZ in Kuwait. A qualitative approach is particularly suited to this study, as it allows for a detailed understanding of complex phenomena within their real-life context (Yin, 2018). By focusing on a single institution, this case study method facilitates an in-depth examination of TM practices, capturing the unique dynamics and contextual factors that influence these practices.

Data is collected through semi-structured interviews with administrators, faculty, and students. Semi-structured interviews are chosen for their flexibility, allowing the researcher to probe deeper into specific issues as they arise while maintaining a consistent framework for data collection (Bryman, 2016). This method enables participants to share their experiences and perspectives in their own words, providing rich, detailed data that can reveal insights inaccessible through more structured methods (Magaldi & Berler, 2020).

To accommodate participants' schedules and locations, one-on-one interviews are provided online or in person, at the discretion of the participant. This approach not only ensures convenience and accessibility but also aligns with contemporary practices in qualitative research, which increasingly leverages digital tools to facilitate data collection (Salmons, 2015). As Chapter Five explains, using Microsoft Teams allows for recording interviews, ensuring accuracy in capturing data and enabling thorough analysis.

1.7 Research Questions

The research questions for this study are derived through an extensive review of the literature and an understanding of the unique context of TM in Kuwaiti HEIs. Qualitative studies focus on questions that explore "how" rather than the "how many" inquiries typical of quantitative research (Fischer & Guzel, 2023). In a qualitative research methodology, research questions are broad, allowing for an in-depth exploration of complex phenomena. Researchers may not fully understand all the theories or concepts at the outset of the study, necessitating open-ended questions that can guide the investigation (Collins & Stockton, 2018). Based on the problem and purpose of this study, the central research questions are:

Central Research Question:

The central research questions are formulated to capture the overarching inquiry into TM practices within a Kuwaiti HEI. These two questions are designed to explore the implementation and evaluation of TM practices and identify the key factors that influence these processes.

RQ1: How are talent management practices implemented and evaluated in a higher educational institution in Kuwait?

RQ2: What are the key influencing factors impacting talent management practices in a higher educational institution in Kuwait?

This study has four sub-research questions:

Sub-Research Questions:

SRQ1: How do institutional vision and policies influence talent management practices in higher educational institutions?

SRQ2: What are the internal and external factors that facilitate and restrain the implementation of talent management policies and practices?

SRQ3: What processes and criteria are used to identify, develop, and retain talent within the institution, and how effective are these processes?

SRQ4: How do organisational stakeholders, including faculty and administrative staff, perceive and contribute to talent management practices?

1.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study draws upon institutional theory (Scott, 2008) and stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) to provide a robust foundation for understanding TM practices within HEIs in Kuwait, as explained in detail in Chapter Four. These theoretical perspectives offer valuable insights into the organisational dynamics and stakeholder interactions that shape TM strategies and outcomes.

1.9 Institutional Theory Context

Institutional theory provides a lens through which to examine how organisations conform to external norms, rules, and expectations within their institutional environment (Scott, 2014). In the context of this study, institutional theory helps HEIs in Kuwait to adopt and implement TM practices. This includes regulatory frameworks, cultural expectations, and educational policies influencing TM strategies.

HEIs in Kuwait, similar to many institutions globally, operate within a complex institutional environment shaped by government regulations, accreditation standards, and societal expectations regarding educational quality and workforce development (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni & Westerwinter, 2021; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Institutional isomorphism, a key concept within institutional theory, suggests that organisations tend to mimic the practices of successful peers or adopt practices perceived as legitimate to enhance their legitimacy and survival (Roszkowska-Menkes, 2022; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In the context of TM, HEIs in Kuwait may adopt certain TM practices to enhance their reputation, attract talent, and align with global educational standards.

1.10 Stakeholder Theory Context

Stakeholder theory focuses on the relationships between organisations and their stakeholders, emphasising the importance of managing these relationships to achieve organisational goals (Freeman,

1984). In the context of TM in HEIs, stakeholders include administrators, faculty, students, governmental bodies, accrediting agencies, local communities, and employers who hire University XYZ's alumni.

Stakeholder theory suggests that organisations must consider the interests and expectations of all stakeholders to achieve sustainable and mutually beneficial outcomes (Mitchell et al., 1997). In the case of HEIs in Kuwait, understanding the perspectives and expectations of stakeholders is crucial for designing effective TM strategies that meet institutional and stakeholder needs. For example, stakeholders such as government bodies may prioritise initiatives that support national workforce development goals. At the same time, administrators, faculty, and students may emphasise factors such as academic freedom, career development opportunities, and inclusivity in TM practices.

1.11 Summary of Underpinning Theories

As discussed previously, these two theories are chosen for their complementary strengths in explaining the various dimensions of TM practices within HEIs. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive approach to examining the multifaceted nature of TM in Kuwaiti HEIs. Integrating institutional theory and stakeholder theory allows an in-depth analysis of how institutional pressures and stakeholder dynamics influence TM practices. These theories will be explored in more detail in Chapter Four.

1.12 Thesis Structure and Chapter Summary

Chapter One of this study introduces the significance of TM in Kuwaiti HEIs, emphasising its critical role in organisational success. It highlights the expansion of TM studies and its relevance to HEIs in Kuwait, particularly concerning recruiting and retaining academic talent. This chapter outlines the problem statement, research purpose, and significance of the study, showing the gap in understanding TM strategies within Kuwaiti HEIs, especially for talent and TM at University XYZ.

Chapter Two explores the context of Kuwait while highlighting Kuwait's educational sector. Chapter Three comprehensively reviews existing literature and research on TM practices, focusing on HEIs. Chapter four explores theoretical frameworks such as institutional and stakeholder theory to provide a conceptual basis for understanding TM in organisational contexts. In Chapter Five, the methodology adopted in this research is described in detail. Chapter Six presents the qualitative data analysis, followed by Chapter Seven, which presents the answers to the research questions. Chapter Eight presents this study's conclusions, contributions, practical implications, and limitations.

In summary, Chapter One provides a background to this research and an overview of the context, theoretical underpinnings, and research questions. The next chapter explores the context of Kuwait.

Chapter 2: Kuwait Context and Higher Education Overview

2.0 Introduction

University XYZ is where the empirical study of the current research will be conducted to address the research questions and achieve the research purpose. University XYZ reflects the challenges faced by institutions across the country and embodies the potential for transformative change through effective TM practices.

This study explores the current TM practices within the Kuwaiti context, particularly at University XYZ, where the stakes are high amidst the pressures of Kuwaitisation and new legislative demands. The university's dynamic environment and strategic importance provide a rich ground for investigating how TM practices can be enhanced and contribute to broader institutional goals.

To effectively address the research questions and objectives, it is essential first to understand the broader context in which University XYZ operates. Therefore, this chapter provides an overview of the State of Kuwait, highlighting key factors that influence organisational practices, including those in HEIs. By examining these external factors, we can better understand the challenges and opportunities that shape TM practices at University XYZ and, by extension, in the Kuwaiti HEI sector.

2.1 Geographic Information

2.1.1 Location

Kuwait is a small, yet strategically significant, country located in the Middle East, at the northeastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula. The country's total land area is approximately 17,818 square kilometres, making it one of the smaller nations in the region (Central Intelligence Agency, 2024). Despite its size, Kuwait's geographic location has historically positioned it as a critical junction for trade routes and cultural exchange.

Kuwait's location has provided it with a strategic advantage in maritime trade. Historically, the country has served as a gateway between the Arabian Peninsula and the more extensive Asian and European continents, facilitating the movement of goods, people, and ideas. This has contributed to Kuwait's rich cultural heritage, diverse population, and economic prosperity. The presence of major ports, such as the Shuwaikh Port and Shuaiba Port, shows the importance of maritime trade to Kuwait's economy (Al-Ali & Al-Sharrah, 2020).

Moreover, Kuwait's geographic characteristics influence its environmental and urban development policies. The arid climate and limited freshwater resources pose challenges for sustainable development, necessitating innovations in water management and urban planning. The country's coastal location also makes it vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels and extreme weather events, prompting efforts to enhance resilience and adaptability (Al-Sabah, 2021).

2.1.2 Population

According to the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) (2024), Kuwait's total population is 4.8 million, with ethnic groups of 32% Kuwaitis and 68% non-Kuwaitis. The Kuwaiti gender ratio is 1.04 %, representing a nearly equal balance between males (49%) and females (51%). Nonetheless, the gender ratio for the expatriates shows a considerable difference between males (66%) and females (34%), respectively (Public Authority for Civil Information, 2024).

Although the majority religion is Islam, Kuwaiti society is enriched with diversity and tolerance. The official language of the state of Kuwait is Arabic, however English is widely spoken.

Substantial expatriates come from South Asia, the Middle East, and Western countries, creating a rich multicultural societal fabric (Shah, 2019). Such a diverse expatriate population has profound implications for labour market dynamics and TM practices within Kuwait, particularly in sectors such as HE.

Kuwait's high percentage of expatriates is mainly due to the country's economic structure and labour market needs. Expatriates are employed across various sectors, including construction, healthcare, education, and domestic work. In HE, expatriates often fill specialised academic and administrative roles, contributing to Kuwaiti institutions' diversity and global outlook (Al-Jarallah & Khraif, 2020). This reliance on expatriate labour shows the importance of effective TM practices to attract and retain skilled professionals from abroad.

Kuwait's demographic composition also impacts social and cultural dynamics. The integration of expatriates into Kuwaiti society has led to the blending of cultural practices and the establishment of diverse communities. However, this multiculturalism presents social cohesion and national identity challenges, necessitating policies that promote inclusivity and mutual respect among different population groups (Al-Mutairi, 2021b).

Furthermore, the demographic imbalance poses challenges for Kuwait's labour market. The high dependency on expatriates for both skilled and unskilled labour has implications for national employment policies and workforce development strategies (Aftimos & Al Saeed, 2023). The government has implemented measures such as the Kuwaitisation policy, which aims to increase the employment of Kuwaiti nationals in various sectors, including the private sector (Kuwait Times, 2022). These policies balance the labour market while ensuring sustainable economic growth and development.

In the context of HE, the diverse population enriches the academic environment, fostering cross-cultural interactions and global perspectives. Institutions should adopt inclusive TM strategies that address the needs of both local and expatriate administrators, enhancing job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Henderson et al., 2024). Such strategies are crucial for maintaining a high standard of education and research, ultimately contributing to Kuwait's broader socio-economic goals.

2.2 Economy

Kuwait's economy relies heavily on its oil reserves, which account for a substantial portion of its gross domestic product (GDP) and government revenue. As one of the world's leading oil producers, Kuwait's oil sector contributes approximately 43% to the GDP and about 90% to government revenues (World Bank, 2022). The immense wealth generated from oil exports has enabled Kuwait to develop a robust welfare state and invest significantly in infrastructure, including education. This oil-driven economic model has facilitated the establishment of extensive social services, high standards of living, and comprehensive public sector employment.

However, this heavy dependence on oil makes the economy vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices. Variations in oil prices can lead to significant budgetary imbalances, affecting public spending across various sectors, including education. During periods of low oil prices, the government may be compelled to cut spending or reallocate resources, potentially impacting the funding available for HEIs and their capacity to implement and sustain effective TM practices (IMF, 2021).

Kuwait has initiated several economic diversification efforts to mitigate these vulnerabilities, notably through Kuwait Vision 2035 (New Kuwait, 2024). The strategic plan aims to transform the country into a financial and commercial hub by reducing its dependence on oil and fostering growth in non-oil sectors. Key investment areas under this vision include education, healthcare, and technology. By investing in these sectors, Kuwait aims to create a more resilient and diversified economy, providing new opportunities for employment and innovation (Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, 2020).

Economic diversification holds significant potential for enhancing TM and development within HEIs. Investments in education and technology are particularly relevant, as they can create new academic programmes, research initiatives, and collaborations with international institutions. These developments can attract and retain talented faculty and researchers, fostering a culture of excellence and innovation in Kuwaiti HE. Additionally, a diversified economy can offer graduates a broader range of career opportunities, encouraging a more dynamic and competitive labour market (Al-Sabah, 2019).

Moreover, the focus on healthcare and technology aligns with global trends, positioning Kuwait to leverage advancements in these fields for economic growth and development. This strategic alignment can enhance the country's ability to attract international expertise and partnerships, further strengthening its talent pool. By diversifying its economy, Kuwait aims to reduce its dependency on oil and build a sustainable and competitive environment that supports the long-term development of its human capital.

Kuwait's economy is primarily driven by oil exports, which account for a significant percentage of its GDP and government revenues. This wealth has enabled substantial investment in public services, including education. Table 1 below demonstrates the various indicators of Kuwait for the years between 2019 and 2023 in their relevant units of measure.

Table 1: Key Socio-Economic Indicators of Kuwait in the years 2019-2023 (World Bank)

Indicator	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
GDP (current US\$ billion)	134.6	116.6	123.8	138.5	146.2
GDP per capita (current US\$)	32,500	27,600	29,100	32,400	34,200
Population (millions)	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6
Unemployment rate (%)	2.2	2.4	2.3	2.1	2.0

2.3 Politics

Kuwait operates under a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system, making it unique among the GCC countries. The Emir of Kuwait wields significant powers, including appointing the Prime Minister and dissolving the National Assembly. This dual governance structure combines hereditary rule with elements of representative democracy, allowing for a relatively high degree of political participation compared to other GCC nations (Herb, 2019).

An active parliament and a tradition of open debate and dissent mark Kuwait's political landscape. The National Assembly, composed of 50 elected members, plays a crucial role in legislation and government oversight. It can question ministers and vote on critical issues, contributing to a dynamic political environment where various viewpoints can be expressed and debated (Al-Mughni, 2020). This level of political engagement indicates a relatively vibrant civil society, and a population invested in governance and public affairs.

Despite maintaining political stability, Kuwait has experienced periodic tensions between the executive branch and the legislative assembly. These tensions often arise from disagreements over policy directions, budget allocations, and governance reforms. Such conflicts can lead to policy implementation delays and impact the effectiveness of government initiatives. For instance, frequent cabinet reshuffles and parliamentary dissolutions have occasionally stalled legislative progress and public sector reforms (Yousef & Beschel Jr., 2024).

The political environment in Kuwait significantly influences the administrative and operational aspects of HEIs. Governmental policies and priorities often shape autonomy, governance, and resource allocation within HEIs. For example, the Ministry of HE oversees strategic planning and funding for public universities, impacting their ability to implement long-term projects and reforms (Gelan et al., 2021). Periodic political tensions can result in fluctuations in budgetary support for HEIs, affecting their operational stability and development plans.

Government policies and priorities have direct implications for TM practices within HEIs. Strategic initiatives to enhance educational quality, research output, and international collaboration often depend on political will and resource availability. Changes in government or shifts in policy focus can lead to

adjustments in funding levels and regulatory frameworks, which in turn affect the recruitment, development, and retention of academic and administrative talent (Aljarrah & Hussain, 2022).

Moreover, the emphasis on Kuwaitisation—a policy aimed at increasing the employment of Kuwaiti nationals—influences staffing strategies in all sectors, including HEIs. While promoting national employment is a crucial objective, it also necessitates balancing the inclusion of expatriate expertise to maintain high educational standards. This balancing act requires a nuanced TM approach that can adapt to the evolving political and policy landscape (Kuwait Times, 2022).

2.4 Education in Kuwait

Education in the State of Kuwait is a fundamental right for all citizens, with the overarching goal of preparing individuals to become active, thoughtful members of society in both the private and public spheres. The state's development strategy indicates the critical role of educational institutions in cultivating these qualities and training individuals to contribute to a skilled workforce. Education is perceived as a primary tool for fostering high performance across institutional, cultural, economic, and social dimensions.

The role and purpose of education in Kuwait is multifaceted. Education aims to balance preserving the state's cultural identity with equipping citizens to adapt to various changes that may arise at national, regional, and international levels. These changes encompass technological advancements, economic shifts, societal transformations, and global developments. By providing the necessary skills, education ensures that citizens are prepared for practical life and can effectively navigate and respond to these evolving circumstances (Al-Mutairi, 2021a).

The Kuwaiti education system is structured into four main stages: preschool, primary education, secondary education, and HE. Each stage caters to students' developmental and educational needs at different levels, ensuring a comprehensive and cohesive educational journey.

2.4.1 Higher Education Provision in Kuwait

HE in Kuwait encompasses university and post-secondary education and training. The foundation of this sector was laid in 1966 when the Kuwaiti Ministry of HE was established, coinciding with the opening of Kuwait University (KU), the nation's first public university. Initially, KU was the sole provider of HE in Kuwait. However, the landscape began to diversify in 2002 with the emergence of private universities such as the Gulf University of Science and Technology (GUST), the Arab Open University (AOU), the Australian University (AU) (previously Australian College of Kuwait - ACK), the American University of Kuwait (AUK), and Box Hill College of Kuwait (BHCK) (see Table 2).

The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) manages technical training at the post-secondary level and oversees various technical institutes and training centres. These centres primarily focus on vocational training, offering two-year programmes for secondary school certificate holders to prepare them for technical roles.

To ensure that private HEIs adhere to licensing and management regulations, the Ministry of HE established the Private Universities Council (PUC). This government body, chaired by the Minister of HE, consists of eight members with expertise in HE who must have no direct or indirect involvement with any HEI during their term. Members are appointed by the Council of Ministers, based on the Minister of HE, and serve three-year terms that can be extended (Private Universities Council, 2020).

The Ministry of HE oversees policy formulation, institutional accreditation, and maintaining educational quality across Kuwait's HE system, which includes a mix of public and private institutions. Notable entities in this system are KU, PAAET, and several private universities such as AUK and GUST (Ministry of Higher Education, 2022).

KU, the country's oldest and largest public university, offers various undergraduate and graduate programmes across various disciplines. The university is pivotal in shaping Kuwait's academic and professional landscape through extensive research initiatives and collaborations with international institutions, significantly contributing to the nation's intellectual and scientific advancement. Moreover, it is a vital hub for developing skilled professionals to meet local and regional labour market demands (Al-Mutairi et al., 2020b).

PAAET focuses on vocational and technical education to address labour market needs. Its programmes equip students with practical skills and knowledge essential for various industries, enhancing their employability and supporting economic diversification. These programmes are designed to bridge the gap between academic education and industry requirements, ensuring graduates are well-prepared for the workforce (Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, 2024).

Private universities in Kuwait play a crucial role in diversifying the HE sector. Institutions similar to AUK and GUST align their programmes with international standards, offering students a global perspective and improving the overall quality of education in the country. These universities emphasise liberal arts education, critical thinking, and innovation, preparing students for a rapidly changing world. The presence of private universities also fosters healthy competition, driving improvements in academic offerings and institutional performance (Al-Haddad, 2022).

Despite Kuwait's HE system's strengths, it faces challenges. A significant issue is aligning educational outcomes with labour market needs. While institutions such as PAAET are addressing this gap, there is a broader need for curriculum reforms and stronger industry-academia partnerships to ensure graduates have the necessary skills and competencies. Additionally, managing a diverse student population, which includes a substantial number of expatriates, presents challenges in ensuring equity and inclusivity in education (Al-Kandari & Al-Hamdan, 2020).

Moreover, research and development (R&D) in Kuwaiti universities require more robust support and funding. Enhancing R&D capabilities fosters innovation and contributes to the country's socio-economic development. Strategic investments in research infrastructure and policies encouraging collaboration

between academia and industry can significantly enhance the impact of HE on national development goals (Al-Qattan, 2021).

The Ministry of HE actively addresses these challenges through various initiatives and reforms. Kuwait Vision 2035 emphasises the importance of education and human capital development as key pillars for sustainable economic growth and diversification (New Kuwait, 2024). This strategic vision includes plans to enhance the quality of education, promote research and innovation, and develop a skilled workforce to transform Kuwait into a knowledge-based economy (Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, 2020).

Table 2: Private Universities and dates of establishment (PUC, 2024)

Sequence #	College/ University	Abbreviations	The dates of establishment
1	Gulf University for Science and Technology	GUST	2002
2	Arab Open University	AOU	2002
3	Maastricht School of Management, Kuwait	MSM Kuwait	2003
4	Australian University (Formerly Australian College of Kuwait, ACK)	AU	2004
5	American University of Kuwait	AUK	2004
6	Box Hill College Kuwait	BHCK	2007
7	American University of the Middle East	AUM	2008
8	American College of the Middle East	ACM	2008
9	Kuwait International Law School	KILAW	2011
10	Kuwait Technical College	K-TECH	2014
11	Algonquin College Kuwait	AC-Kuwait	2015
12	Kuwait College of Science and Technology	KCST	2015
13	College of Aviation Technology	CAT	2015

2.4.2 Core Issues Facing the Higher Education Sector in Kuwait

Kuwait is rapidly advancing towards a Knowledge Economy², bolstered by the concurrent growth of its education sector (World Bank Group, 2022; The Central Agency for Information Technology, 2024). This progress is mirrored in other Middle Eastern countries, such as the UAE, where British universities initially faced challenges with reports of deficient performance, prompting local universities to enhance their quality and reputation. This regional trend depicts Kuwait's competitive position as a study destination within the Middle East, competing with neighbouring countries and their universities.

The education landscape in Kuwait is evolving dynamically. International educational institutions have established campuses equipped with modern facilities and diverse programmes tailored to Kuwaiti citizens' educational needs. Kuwait is recognised as a leader within the GCC for its commitment to providing extensive educational opportunities (Private Universities Council, 2020). Anticipating future

² Knowledge Economy: a system in which the production of goods and services is based principally on knowledge-intensive activities that contribute to technical and scientific innovation and advancement (World Bank Group, 2022).
SA, Aftimos, DBA Thesis, Aston University 2024

trends, Kuwait's educational sector embraces innovations such as virtual learning, digitisation, and augmented reality. This forward-thinking approach aims to cater comprehensively to student needs by ensuring top-tier faculty, robust facilities, and innovative technology (Deloitte University Press, 2018; UNESCO, 2024).

Moreover, Kuwait's education sector is adapting to the rapid population growth and increasing demand for educational equity (Alainati, 2024; Oxford Economics, 2012). The market includes a diverse array of institutions, encompassing both public universities, which issue locally accredited certificates under Kuwait's Ministry of Education, and private universities offering internationally recognised degrees from institutions such as Purdue University, Central Queensland University, and the University of Missouri – St. Louis (Private Universities Council, 2020).

In recent years, the region has seen a rise in the number of educational institutions and student enrolments, accompanied by improvements in quality and standards. Factors contributing to these advancements include increased private sector involvement, policy revisions, and infrastructural developments (Ernst & Young, 2015a; Oxford Business, 2024). However, amidst the competitive talent landscape in the region, institutions face the critical imperative of acquiring and retaining skilled personnel to maintain their competitive edge (Raheem, 2012).

Sociopolitical shifts, such as Kuwaitisation initiatives and efforts to diversify the economy away from oil dependence, further highlight the broader context shaping Kuwait's educational sector. These initiatives aim not only to enhance educational outcomes but also to align graduates' skills with industry needs, ensuring they possess essential attributes such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills, creativity, critical thinking, and effective communication (Posarić & Ćorić, 2023; Osmani et al., 2017).

The HE sector in Kuwait faces several core issues that impact its effectiveness and quality. The quality of education in HEIs remains a critical concern. While substantial investments have been made in the sector, there are ongoing challenges in maintaining and enhancing academic standards. Factors such as outdated curricula, limited use of innovative teaching methods, and insufficient emphasis on critical thinking skills contribute to this issue. Moreover, there is a need for more rigorous quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that educational programmes meet international standards. According to Saleem et al. (2021) continuous PD for faculty and regular curriculum updates are essential to addressing these quality concerns and improving educational outcomes.

Recruiting and retaining qualified faculty is another significant challenge for Kuwaiti HEIs. The competitive global academic market makes it difficult to attract top-tier talent, particularly in specialised fields. Additionally, retaining faculty members is complicated by factors such as limited opportunities for professional growth, governmental constraints, and comparatively lower salaries than those offered by institutions in other regions. Enhancing the recruitment process, offering competitive compensation

packages, and providing robust PD opportunities are crucial strategies to mitigate these challenges (Chethana & Noronha, 2023).

Student enrolment and retention are pivotal issues that impact the sustainability and effectiveness of HEIs in Kuwait. Despite efforts to expand access to HE, institutions face challenges in attracting and retaining students. Factors such as academic preparedness, financial barriers, and the perceived relevance of academic programmes to career opportunities influence enrolment and retention rates. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach, including enhancing academic support services, offering scholarships, and aligning educational programmes with labour market demands (Al-Qudsi & Al-Mutawa, 2020).

Governance and autonomy are critical aspects that influence the performance and reputation of HEIs in Kuwait. The centralisation of decision-making processes and limited institutional autonomy can impede the ability to implement innovative policies and respond effectively to emerging challenges. Enhancing governance structures to allow greater autonomy while maintaining accountability is essential for fostering a dynamic and responsive HE sector. This can be achieved through policy reforms that delegate more authority to individual institutions and encourage participatory decision-making processes (Al-Mughni, 2021).

PD for faculty and administrators is essential for maintaining high educational standards and institutional efficiency. However, opportunities for continuous PD are often limited in Kuwaiti HEIs. Investing in comprehensive PD programmes, including training workshops, advanced degrees, and international exchange programmes, can significantly enhance the skills and capabilities of administrators and faculty. Such initiatives are vital for ensuring educational practices remain current and effective (Al-Kandari & Al-Hamdan, 2020).

Internationalisation is a crucial strategy for enhancing the quality and competitiveness of HEIs. In Kuwait, efforts to internationalise HE include establishing partnerships with foreign universities, promoting student and faculty exchanges, and adopting international curricula. However, cultural differences, administrative hurdles, and resource constraints can impede these efforts. Developing clear internationalisation policies, fostering a supportive cultural environment, and ensuring adequate funding are critical for successful internationalisation initiatives (Al-Fadly, 2020).

Effective policy and regulatory frameworks are essential for the smooth functioning of HEIs. In Kuwait, challenges relate to the rigidity and complexity of regulatory processes, which can stifle innovation and responsiveness. Streamlining regulatory frameworks, ensuring clarity in policy directives, and fostering a collaborative approach between regulatory bodies and HEIs can enhance institutional efficiency and flexibility. Such reforms are necessary for creating an enabling environment for HE (Al-Mutairi & Al-Sabah, 2021).

Aligning HE programmes with industry needs is crucial for enhancing the employability of graduates and supporting economic development. Kuwaiti HEIs often face gaps between academic training and labour market requirements. Strengthening partnerships with industry, incorporating practical and experiential learning opportunities, and regularly updating curricula to reflect industry trends are essential strategies for closing this gap. Ensuring that educational programmes are relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of the economy is critical to the success of HEIs and the broader development goals of Kuwait (Al-Salem, 2021).

2.5 Overview of Kuwait's Labour Market

Kuwait's labour market is shaped by a unique interplay of demographics, economic dependence on oil, and governmental policies aimed at nationalisation and economic diversification. This comprehensive overview delves into the key facets of Kuwait's labour market landscape, highlighting its challenges, opportunities, and the implications for HEIs.

2.5.1 Demographics and Workforce Composition

Kuwait has a relatively small population, with a considerable proportion comprising expatriates who play crucial roles in various sectors, particularly the private sector. Expatriates are employed across a spectrum of industries, from construction to services, filling positions ranging from low-skilled to highly specialised roles (Behar, 2015). In contrast, Kuwaiti nationals predominantly work in the public sector, attracted by higher wages, job security, and social benefits (Al-Mutairi & Al-Sabah, 2021).

The labour force participation rate among Kuwaiti nationals is lower than among expatriates, reflecting preferences for public sector employment and historical socio-economic factors. This disparity highlights the dual nature of Kuwait's labour market, where nationals and expatriates occupy distinct spheres with varying employment conditions and opportunities.

2.5.2 Employment Sectors

The public sector remains the largest employer of Kuwaiti nationals, offering attractive compensation packages and job stability. This sector spans government ministries, education, healthcare, and utilities, providing essential services and administrative functions (Al-Qudsi & Al-Jarallah, 2020).

In contrast, the private sector is heavily reliant on expatriate labour, particularly in industries such as construction, hospitality, and retail. Challenges such as lower wage competitiveness, perceived job security issues, and differences in working conditions compared to the public sector contribute to Kuwaiti nationals' hesitancy to enter or remain in private sector employment (Al-Mutairi et al., 2020a). Figure 1 below provides a further breakdown of employment per sector in Kuwait as of the year 2018.

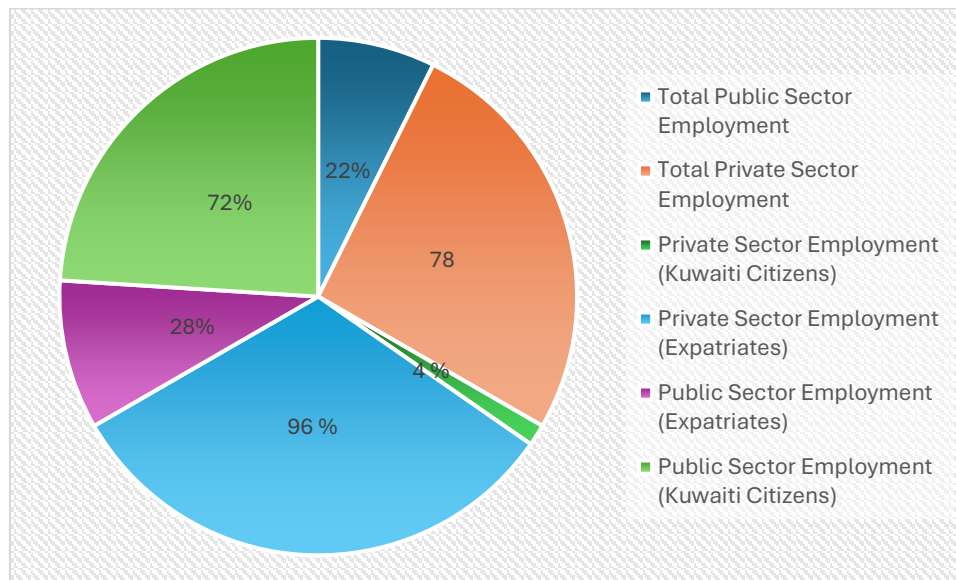


Figure 1: Distribution of Kuwaitis and expatriates in Kuwait's workforce (PACI, 2018)

2.5.3 Unemployment and the Role of Higher Educational Institutions

Unemployment rates tend to be higher among Kuwaiti nationals compared to expatriates. This discrepancy is attributed to factors such as the preference for public sector jobs, skills mismatches, and limited opportunities in the private sector that align with Kuwaiti qualifications (Al-Mutawa & Al-Salem, 2021). Kuwaiti nationals often prefer public sector employment due to its attractive benefits and job security. Public sector jobs typically provide higher salaries, shorter working hours, and more generous pension schemes than the private sector (Al-Fadly, 2020). This preference for public sector employment has created an oversupply of job seekers in the government sector, leading to higher unemployment rates among those who do not secure such positions.

Skills mismatches between Kuwaiti nationals' qualifications and the private sector's demands also contribute to unemployment. Many Kuwaiti graduates have degrees in fields that do not align with the private sector's needs, resulting in a surplus of job seekers with irrelevant qualifications (Al-Hamadi & Budhwar, 2020). The education system in Kuwait has been criticised for not adequately preparing students for the labour market, leading to a gap between education outcomes and employer expectations (Al-Hamadi & Budhwar, 2020).

The private sector in Kuwait is often dominated by expatriates who fill a wide range of positions, from low-skilled to highly specialised roles. Kuwaiti nationals face limited opportunities in the private sector due to several factors, including competition with expatriates willing to accept lower wages and a lack of alignment between private-sector job opportunities and the qualifications of Kuwaiti nationals (Shah, 2019). Additionally, cultural factors and perceptions about the desirability of specific jobs may deter Kuwaitis from pursuing careers in the private sector.

The government has implemented various initiatives to encourage private-sector employment and address unemployment among Kuwaiti nationals. These initiatives include policies mandating a certain percentage

of Kuwaiti employees in private companies and programmes providing incentives for private sector companies to hire Kuwaiti nationals (Al-Mutawa & Al-Salem, 2021). Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of such policies has been mixed, and unemployment remains a significant challenge.

2.5.4 The Role of Higher Educational Institutions in Supporting Kuwaitisation

HEIs in Kuwait play a crucial role in addressing these employment challenges and supporting the goals of Kuwaitisation. By aligning their curricula with the needs of the private sector, HEIs can help bridge the skills gap that contributes to unemployment among Kuwaiti nationals. This alignment involves updating academic programmes to reflect current market demands and fostering partnerships with private sector companies to ensure graduates are well-prepared for available job opportunities (Al-Hamadi & Budhwar, 2020).

HEIs can also support Kuwaitisation by providing targeted career services and PD programmes that enhance the employability of Kuwaiti students. These services might include internships, cooperative education programmes, and job placement assistance that connects students with potential employers in the private sector (Al-Fadly, 2020). Additionally, HEIs can offer training programmes that focus on developing specific skills in high demand, thereby improving the match between graduates' qualifications and private sector needs (Shah, 2019).

By fostering a talent-driven culture, HEIs in Kuwait can contribute to the nation's long-term vision for growth, human capital development, and sustainability (Al-Mutawa & Al-Salem, 2021). This involves attracting and retaining top academic talent and engaging in continuous dialogue with government and industry stakeholders to ensure educational outcomes align with national economic objectives. Through these efforts, HEIs can play a pivotal role in reducing unemployment among Kuwaiti nationals and supporting the successful implementation of Kuwaitisation policies.

2.5.5 Education and Skills Levels

Kuwait has invested significantly in its education system, yet challenges persist in aligning educational outcomes with the labour market's demands. The education system emphasises academic qualifications over vocational skills, resulting in a skills gap affecting graduates' employability and job readiness. Vocational training and PD programmes are increasingly essential to bridging this gap and enhancing the workforce's preparedness for diverse sectors (Al-Kandari & Al-Mughni, 2021).

2.5.6 Economic Diversification

As a major oil exporter, Kuwait's economy has historically relied on oil revenues. Kuwait has embarked on initiatives outlined in Vision 2035 to mitigate this dependence and foster sustainable economic growth. The strategic framework aims to diversify the economy by developing the financial, real estate, tourism, and logistics sectors. These efforts are crucial for creating new job opportunities, reducing vulnerability to oil price fluctuations, and promoting private sector growth (New Kuwait, 2024).

2.5.7 Labor Market Policies and Reforms

Central to Kuwait's labour policies is the Kuwaitisation initiative, which seeks to increase the employment of Kuwaiti nationals in the private sector. Measures include quotas, financial incentives, and regulations encouraging private companies to hire more nationals. Implementation challenges include compliance issues, enforcement gaps, and the need for continuous adaptation to economic conditions and labour market dynamics (Al-Jarallah & Al-Kandari, 2022).

Kuwait's labour laws govern employment conditions, including wages, working hours, and benefits. While these laws provide a framework for protecting workers' rights, enforcement can be inconsistent, particularly in the private sector, where regulatory oversight may be less stringent (Al-Sabah & Al-Qattan, 2021).

2.5.8 Opportunities

Continued economic reforms aimed at diversification and private sector development present opportunities for job creation and economic resilience. Strengthening non-oil sectors, fostering entrepreneurship, and enhancing the investment climate are key strategies to unlock new employment opportunities and promote sustainable growth (Al-Salem & Al-Haddad, 2021). Increased investment in education and vocational training can address skills gaps, enhance employability, and support Kuwaiti nationals' participation in diverse economic sectors. This includes expanding access to quality education, promoting lifelong learning, and fostering partnerships between HEIs and industry stakeholders (Al-Qudsi & Al-Hamdan, 2022). Encouraging entrepreneurial initiatives and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can stimulate job creation, innovation, and economic diversification. Entrepreneurship education, access to funding, and supportive regulatory frameworks are essential to nurturing a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem in Kuwait (Al-Jarallah & Al-Sabah, 2020).

2.6 Why is University XYZ chosen?

University XYZ is influenced by multiple factors, positioning it as an exemplary case for examining TM practices within a HEI. First, University XYZ is a prominent institution within the region, characterised by a diverse workforce, well-established academic programs, and has a reputation for implementing innovative administrative and educational practices. Its strategic importance in the local and regional HE landscape provided a rich context for examining how institutional objectives and external pressures shape TM practices (Al Ariss et al., 2016). Also, University XYZ has been actively involved in policies such as Kuwaitisation, which prioritises the employment of nationals, making it an exemplary case for analysing the effects of national policies on TM frameworks within HEIs (Al-Mutairi et al., 2020a).

Second, the institution's organisational complexity and diverse stakeholder environment, comprised of administrators, faculty, students, and external entities such as government bodies, offered a multifaceted view of the challenges and opportunities in TM implementation. Given the importance of stakeholder engagement in TM, University XYZ provided a dynamic environment to investigate how internal and external

stakeholders influence TM practices, aligning with the principles of Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984). Including varied stakeholder groups was essential for understanding the broader implications of TM strategies beyond internal administrative decisions.

The institution's receptiveness to research partnerships provided valuable access to essential informants, such as decision-makers and staff members. This access greatly improved the collection of comprehensive, qualitative data via interviews, which is crucial for acquiring deep insights into the institution's TM practices (Yin, 2018).

Ultimately, the decision to concentrate on University XYZ is strategically aligned with the research purpose of advancing knowledge in the under-researched area of TM within the GCC context. Opting for a premier institution in Kuwait allows this research to bridge the existing literature gap, offering insights that hold potential applicability across comparable HEIs throughout the region (El-Tahir, 2019).

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides an overview of Kuwait's geographic, economic, and political contexts, which are crucial for understanding the environment in which HEIs operate. Kuwait's unique geographic location, economic reliance on oil, and political structure create a distinctive backdrop for exploring TM practices. These factors collectively shape the challenges and opportunities HEIs face in Kuwait, specifically University XYZ, influencing their strategies for implementing and evaluating TM practices.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.0 Introduction

This study investigates TM practices employed at University XYZ in Kuwait. The research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how academic talent is defined, recruited, and managed within this specific context. This chapter presents a literature review that explores various aspects influencing these practices.

The review begins by discussing the definition of TM and TM effectiveness both globally and in the Middle East, the institutional vision, and policies on TM, and how the HEI's strategic goals and policies shape TM practices. The section on organisational context and characteristics influencing change efforts examines the internal dynamics of the institution, such as organisational culture and structural factors, which impact the implementation of TM initiatives.

Next, external factors facilitating TM policies and practices are explored, highlighting the broader societal and economic conditions that support TM efforts. This is followed by an analysis of external factors restraining TM policies and practices, which addresses challenges such as regulatory constraints and market conditions that may hinder effective TM.

This chapter also considers internal factors facilitating TM policy implementation, such as leadership commitment and resource availability, alongside internal factors restraining TM policy implementation, which include organisational inertia and resistance to change. The theoretical underpinnings of this study are also discussed. The concluding section, of Chapter Three, looks at the various stakeholders involved in the TM process: administrators, faculty, students, and external partners.

3.1 Definition of Talent Management

The concept of "talent" has evolved over time, but it is generally understood to represent an individual's ability to perform effectively across a range of disciplines. These include physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, legal, and financial domains. The term can encompass a wide variety of attributes, such as knowledge, skills, problem-solving abilities, emotional intelligence, and other characteristics that add value to an organisation or society (Collings et al., 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries & González-Cruz, 2013).

While some definitions of talent focus strictly on innate abilities or specific skill sets (Cappelli, 2019), others argue that talent should be seen as a broader construct that includes both natural aptitudes and developed competencies (Guthridge, Komm, & Lawson, 2008). For the purposes of TM, a comprehensive approach that includes both inherent and cultivated capabilities aligns best with the strategic goals of organisational development.

Defining "management" in an organisational context generally refers to the process of overseeing resources, including human, financial, and physical, to meet organisational objectives (Fayol, 1949).

Specifically, management involves organising, planning, leading, and controlling to ensure the achievement of the desired outcomes (Mintzberg, 1975).

TM, therefore, involves the careful orchestration of these resources, with particular attention given to human capital. Many definitions of TM emphasise the strategic alignment of talent with organisational goals and suggest that it goes beyond simple workforce planning to include long-term TD and retention strategies (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001; Vaiman et al., 2021).

Numerous studies show that TM is not merely a reactive process of filling vacancies but rather a proactive, strategic approach aimed at aligning the right individuals with organisational needs, now and in the future (Collings et al., 2019). According to Tarique and Schuler (2010), TM integrates various functions such as recruitment, development, Performance Management (PM), and succession planning, with the goal of optimising human capital within the context of an organisation's strategic objectives.

TM can be defined in many ways, but one comprehensive view sees it as a strategic exercise involving the acquisition, development, deployment, and retention of talent. The goal is not only to fill roles, but to ensure that individuals within the organisation can reach their full potential (Cappelli, 2019). TM also involves creating the right structures and processes to support this continuous development, ensuring that the organisation has a pipeline of capable individuals ready to meet evolving business needs (Stahl et al., 2020).

While there are numerous ways to define TM, it is crucial to choose one that reflects both the strategic and operational aspects of the field. Some definitions focus too narrowly on talent acquisition (e.g., those that emphasise recruiting top performers without considering ongoing development), whereas others may overemphasise retention without integrating other critical elements such as development or alignment with organisational goals (Lewis & Heckman, 2006).

The definitions lack clarity regarding the interplay between "talent" and "organisational culture" (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). TM should not be seen as a series of isolated practices, but rather as an integrated process that aligns the right individuals with an organisation's culture, values, and strategic vision.

Drawing on these insights, for the purpose of this thesis, TM has been interpreted as the strategic management of human capital within an organisation, encompassing the identification, acquisition, development, deployment, and retention of individuals who possess the knowledge, skills, abilities, and potential to contribute meaningfully to organisational success. It involves the careful creation of structures, processes, and strategies that foster the growth and utilisation of talent in alignment with the organisation's objectives.

3.2 The Emergence of Talent Management

TM can be traced back to the late 1990s, with a pivotal moment occurring in 1997 when McKinsey & Company published their landmark report titled *The War for Talent* (Chambers et al., 1998). The report highlighted the growing importance of a skilled workforce in an increasingly globalised economy, positioning human capital as a key driver of organisational competitive advantage (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001). This notion of talent as a strategic asset marked a paradigm shift, emphasising that effective management of people could be as crucial to organisational success as managing financial or technological resources (Collings et al., 2019).

While the *War for Talent* report introduced the idea of human capital as a vital component of organisational strategy, other scholars have critiqued the emphasis on talent as a scarce resource. Lewis and Heckman (2006) argue that while talent is important, focusing on it in isolation may lead organisations to overlook the broader context of organisational development, such as employee engagement and workforce diversity, both of which play crucial roles in organisational success. Therefore, the focus on talent in the late 1990s, while groundbreaking, was just one perspective on how to manage human resources effectively.

In the following decades, the rapid acceleration of globalisation, technological advancements, and demographic changes has only heightened the relevance of TM. As businesses face new challenges such as the digitisation of industries, the rise of automation, and shifting workforce dynamics, organisations are increasingly aware that having the right talent is pivotal in responding to these challenges (Sparrow, Scullion, & Tarique, 2014). Moreover, the emergence of knowledge-based economies has cemented the role of TM, as intellectual capital and innovation have become key determinants of organisational performance (Koch & O'Rourke, 2018). TM now encompasses not only the acquisition of skilled individuals but also the continuous development and retention of knowledge-driven talent that can adapt to the changing demands of the market (Kramar, 2014).

In addition, TM's evolution has been shaped by the changing expectations of the workforce itself, particularly with the influx of Millennials and Generation Z. These younger generations expect organisations to offer more than just competitive salaries; they seek career development opportunities, work-life balance, and a company's commitment to social impact and ethical practices (CIPD, 2020). As a result, TM has become integral to shaping value propositions that resonate with these generations, who now form a significant portion of the global workforce. This shift has forced organisations to re-evaluate their strategies for employee engagement and retention, creating a need for more flexible, dynamic approaches to TM (Raghuram, 2017; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the development of TM is linked to broader trends in work and workforce management. The rise of flexible work arrangements and remote work have introduced new complexities in talent acquisition and management (Collings, McDonnell, & Nyberg, 2022). As these changes occur, organisations must

adapt their TM practices to attract, engage, and retain top talent in a more fluid and decentralised employment landscape (Foss, 2009; Kramar, 2014). These new models of work have driven the need for organisations to innovate in how they define, manage, and develop talent, while maintaining alignment with organisational goals.

3.2.1 Differentiating Talent Management from Related Constructs

It is noted that TM is commonly associated with other concepts such as human resource management (HRM), workforce planning and leadership development (Hendrawan, Rosari, & Nastiti, 2024). While these constructs may be similar, TM differs in its significant emphasis on strategy and selection processes to foster high performers. Discussed below are the vital distinctions that set TM apart.

3.2.1.1 Distinction from HRM

HRM is a broad concept that is used to facilitate the overall management of employees in an organisation. Some of the areas include employee recruitment, onboarding, training, compensation, PM, and compliance with labour laws (Kaufman, 2015). Like all other systems in organisations, HRM adopts a universal strategy to try to fulfil the demands of all employees and keep organisational operations running.

While HRM is quite generic in its approach, TM, by definition, is more pointed and intentional. Its essential purpose is to recognise, develop and maintain high performers and talents searching for dynamic roles that are vital for the realisation of an organisation's long-term goals (Collings et al., 2019). Unlike HRM, which has a standardised approach to TM, TM is particularised for certain talent segments. For instance, TM may provide material and human resources in proportion to predetermined significant performers or positions. Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen (2016) point out this difference, stating that TM is, in fact, selective, therefore targeting positions and persons that would have maximum organisational retroactive effect.

3.2.1.2 Distinction from Workforce Planning

Workforce planning is primarily concerned with forecasting an organisation's future human capital needs based on quantitative metrics such as headcounts, attrition rates, and labour market conditions. It focuses on ensuring that the right number of employees with the appropriate skills are available to meet the company's projected workforce requirements (Becker & Huselid, 2017). The approach is largely tactical, with an emphasis on minimising risks related to workforce gaps.

While TM may include elements of workforce planning, it extends beyond mere quantification. TM is more forward-thinking, focusing on innovation and long-term development. As Collings et al. (2019) explain, while workforce planning is operational and tactical, TM is strategic and involves aligning human capital with broader organisational goals. TM's focus on nurturing individual talent, developing leadership, and fostering innovation differentiates it from the traditionally quantitative and reactive nature of workforce planning.

3.2.1.3 Distinction from Leadership Development

Leadership development, while it might be used as part of a TM framework, is more specialised. Its purpose is to learn about and develop higher-level skills and professional competencies in leadership-bound professionals or those who show leadership potential (Day, 2001). While leadership management focuses from a local, operational point of view, TM takes on more of an organisation's scope.

Leadership development is an element of TM, but a total TM approach aligns it with a broader range of priorities such as employee communication, diversity management, retention, and development of workers at all organisational levels, as well as worker training, development, and education. In extending the scope of TM, Meyers, Smith & Jones (2020) note that the incorporation of leadership development guarantees that organisational strategies are integrated into a framework of TD that is strategic to the organisation (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2017).

3.2.1.4 Talent Management as a Systemic and Integrated Approach

TM is fundamentally defined by its systemic and integrated nature, which distinguishes it from traditional HRM. TM extends beyond routine HR practices, requiring seamless integration with other organisational functions to achieve both immediate and long-term organisational objectives (Vaiman et al., 2021). This integrated approach ensures that TM not only addresses current workforce needs but also aligns with the strategic priorities of the organisation to sustain success and competitiveness in dynamic environments (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020).

Unlike conventional workforce strategies, TM focuses on identifying and nurturing potential talent while coordinating these efforts with broader organisational goals. This approach enables organisations to view themselves as progressive and adaptive systems rather than static entities defined solely by HRM or strategic workforce planning (Collings et al., 2019). TM emphasises the creation of value through a talent-centric perspective that integrates leadership development, succession planning, and PM (Schuler et al., 2011).

3.2.2 Definition of Talent Management for this Research

For the purposes of this research, TM is defined as a strategic and systematic approach to identifying, attracting, developing, engaging, and retaining individuals who possess the skills, capabilities, and potential to significantly contribute to organisational success. This definition aligns with the foundational work of Collings et al. (2019), who emphasise the strategic role of TM in fostering organisational performance by identifying key talent within the workforce.

TM is increasingly recognised as a dynamic and context-dependent construct, influenced by the unique challenges and opportunities facing organisations. Within the HE sector, TM often encompasses the recruitment and retention of academic staff, the development of leadership capabilities, and the alignment

of institutional goals with employee aspirations (Farndale et al., 2020). These priorities reflect the specific needs of HEIs, where intellectual capital and innovative research are critical for institutional success (Beechler & Woodward, 2009).

3.3 Why should organisations care?

TM is increasingly recognised as a critical determinant of organisational success, particularly within HEIs. It encompasses the strategic processes of identifying, attracting, developing, engaging, and retaining human capital, ensuring the alignment of individual capabilities with organisational objectives. The importance of TM is not just theoretical; empirical evidence demonstrates its positive influence on productivity, innovation, employee satisfaction, and ultimately, sustainable competitive advantage (Collings et al., 2019; Farndale et al., 2020). This is explored further in Chapter Six.

3.3.1 Driving Organisational Performance

TM plays a significant role in aligning an organisation's workforce with its strategic goals and objectives. By ensuring the right people are in the right positions, organisations can effectively achieve their mission and increase their competitiveness. For HEIs, this alignment is critical due to the fast-changing job market and the need for institutions to continuously provide employable graduates (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). Moreover, faculty members play a pivotal role in delivering quality education and conducting impactful research, meaning that the best TM strategies are vital for attracting and retaining intellectual capital (Schuler et al., 2011). This becomes particularly important for HEIs in competitive global rankings, where strong TM frameworks can bolster an institution's reputation and enhance its research capabilities (King, 2017).

However, while much has been written about TM in the private sector, the application of TM in HEIs is less well explored. Gaps remain in understanding how TM frameworks in HEIs can address both academic excellence and administrative efficiency (Saks, 2021).

3.3.2 Enhancing Agility and Resilience

In an era characterised by technological advancements, economic volatility, and global crises, organisations must be agile and resilient. TM enhances organisational flexibility by fostering a capable workforce that can respond to change (Ulrich, 2021). For HEIs in the Middle East, TM has enabled institutions to adapt to increasing demands for internationalisation, the integration of innovative technologies in teaching, and evolving student expectations (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014). Upskilling and reskilling practices are central to this agility, ensuring that faculty members possess the relevant skills to meet emerging challenges (Senge, 2019).

However, a gap in the literature exists concerning how HEIs in the Middle East are specifically leveraging TM for resilience in the face of regional economic and political challenges (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014).

3.3.3 Strengthening Employer Branding

In a competitive labour market, an institution's ability to attract top-tier talent depends significantly on its employer brand. TM supports this process by promoting employee satisfaction, fostering PD, and creating an inclusive organisational culture (King, 2017). For HEIs, institutional reputation is paramount. A commitment to faculty development and support can enhance an institution's attractiveness to international scholars and potential students, directly impacting its research potential and funding opportunities (Farndale et al., 2020).

Although much has been discussed regarding employer branding in the private sector, limited research exists on how HEIs can strategically use TM to strengthen their reputation on a global scale (Schuler et al., 2011).

3.3.4 Aligning with National Regional Goals

TM also supports the alignment of organisational strategies with national and regional development goals. In the Middle East, for example, the Kuwaitisation policy aims to increase the number of local nationals in the workforce. HEIs can play a critical role in this process by cultivating local talent through targeted training and education initiatives (Špeliš & Černe, 2014). Such alignment not only supports national development but also ensures that HEIs remain competitive on an international level (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014).

However, research on the integration of TM with national policies in the Middle Eastern context is still nascent, particularly regarding how these policies impact faculty recruitment and retention in HEIs (Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014).

3.3.5 Promoting Organisational Culture and Engagement

TM plays a key role in shaping an organisation's culture and fostering employee engagement, which are essential for maintaining high levels of productivity and quality output. In HEIs, a strong organisational culture influences the quality of education and research. Faculty engagement, in turn, impacts retention rates and institutional success (Senge, 2019). TM practices that promote professional growth and leadership opportunities can help reduce turnover, ensuring the continuity of academic excellence and research innovation (Saks, 2021).

Research on the intersection of TM and organisational culture in HEIs is still underdeveloped, particularly in terms of how engagement strategies are tailored to the unique challenges faced by academic staff (Farndale et al., 2020).

3.3.6 Supporting Long-term Sustainability

Failure to invest in TM can lead to negative outcomes such as high turnover, poor employee engagement, and an overall lack of competitiveness. In addition, effective TM ensures the long-term sustainability of human capital by developing a robust talent pipeline that is well-equipped to meet future challenges (Senge, 2019). For HEIs, sustainability goes beyond financial considerations, it includes the ability to continuously provide high-quality education, attract research funding, and maintain student enrolment (Beechler & Woodward, 2009).

3.4 Talent Management Effectiveness

3.4.1 When Talent Management Works

TM becomes meaningful when the systems, tools, and initiatives align with the institution's objectives. Research consistently highlights that the effectiveness of TM practices is most evident in environments where leadership commitment, legal frameworks supporting TM, and sufficient resources are in place (Ulrich, 2021; Northouse, 2021). Successful institutions develop TM strategies that reflect the institution's goals, ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of employees are clearly understood, thus facilitating the alignment of human capital with strategic objectives (Collings et al., 2019). Effective TM initiatives are seen in universities where there is a robust leadership commitment to TM practices. For instance, studies show that when leaders actively promote teamwork and share a vision for talent growth, institutional performance improves significantly (Huselid, 2018). Moreover, strong legal frameworks that embed TM policies into institutional culture can guarantee long-term sustainability and compliance with national or regional regulations (Stahl et al., 2020). Institutions that invest in TM frameworks understand that human capital is a pivotal source of competitive advantage, particularly in the context of HE, where the retention and development of top academic talent directly influence institutional prestige and productivity (Collings et al., 2019).

3.4.2 Why Talent Management Matters

TM is a valuable model due to its potential to enhance employee commitment, elevate performance standards, and contribute to the attainment of long-term institutional objectives. Numerous studies have indicated that institutions that implement effective TM practices experience improved employee retention, enhanced institutional identification, and the ability to adapt to changes within the organisational environment (Senge, 2019). In the context of HE, where innovation and academic excellence are core values, TM plays a critical role in fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Universities with well-structured TM frameworks tend to produce higher-quality research and maintain strong faculty engagement (Kulik, Ryan, Harper, & Chen, 2020). Furthermore, TM contributes to the overall organisational effectiveness by improving organisational commitment, which directly affects academic staff retention rates (Boon et al., 2018).

TM also enhances an institution's ability to meet external demands, including the pressures for academic excellence, research innovation, and workforce preparation for the global market. Effective TM practices in HEIs have been shown to result in improved teaching quality, better research output, and a more engaged faculty, thus strengthening the institution's academic standing globally (Cappelli, 2019). Moreover, TM also improves organisational agility, enabling institutions to adapt quickly to emerging trends such as technological advancements and global academic collaborations (Kaufman et al., 2021).

3.4.3 How Talent Management Works

Effective TM operates through systems designed to identify, cultivate, and sustain talent. According to Saks (2021), a comprehensive TM framework should consist of various elements, including ongoing professional learning opportunities, competitive reward structures, and clear career advancement paths. In HE, TM practices support the dual role of faculty members as educators and researchers, ensuring that academic staff are provided with the resources and opportunities they need to thrive in both domains (Aguinis & O'Boyle, 2014).

One of the core functions of TM in HE is to cultivate a workforce that is capable of supporting the institution's research agenda and adapting to the evolving demands of teaching and learning. The increasing demand for interdisciplinary collaboration, innovative research, and global academic partnerships requires TM policies that support flexibility and foster a collaborative working environment (Stahl et al., 2020). Furthermore, in the face of rapid technological changes, TM frameworks that encourage continuous PD and upskilling are essential in ensuring that faculty members are equipped with the skills necessary to deliver cutting-edge education and research (Tymon & Batistic, 2023). This ongoing focus on talent cultivation enables institutions to remain competitive and sustainable in the long term, adapting to changes in the HE landscapes while simultaneously improving faculty satisfaction and retention (Tansley, 2011).

3.5 Enablers and Barriers of Talent Management

3.5.1 External Factors Facilitating TM Policies and Practices

This section examines the external factors that significantly impact TM policy and practice development and implementation within HEIs. These factors, often beyond the direct control of the institution, play a crucial role in shaping TM strategies and influencing how effectively universities attract, develop, and retain talent. Understanding these external drivers is essential for HEIs seeking to maintain competitiveness in a rapidly evolving academic landscape.

The discussion covers a range of key external factors, including competitive compensation packages, cultural and societal values, global workforce trends, market dynamics, economic factors, regulatory frameworks, and effective resource management.

3.5.1.1 Competitive Compensation Packages

Competitive compensation packages are essential for attracting and retaining top talent in HEIs. Key external factors that facilitate effective TM practices. They are not just a fundamental component of TM but also an external factor that significantly impacts the effectiveness of TM practices. According to Deloitte (2020) and Mercer (2021), institutions that offer attractive salaries and comprehensive benefits are better positioned to draw skilled professionals. Compensation strategies that align with industry standards and reflect the institution's financial health are critical. As identified by HayGroup (2020) and Willis Towers Watson (2021), performance-based incentives and recognition programmes are instrumental in enhancing employee motivation and engagement. These strategies serve not only to attract high-quality candidates but also to retain them by ensuring that employees feel appreciated and fairly rewarded for their contributions.

Competitive compensation extends beyond just salary to include benefits such as health insurance, retirement plans, and PD allowances. Providing comprehensive packages that address various aspects of an employee's life can be decisive in maintaining a motivated and committed workforce (Deloitte, 2020; Mercer, 2021). Institutions that offer robust benefits are often perceived as more attractive employers, leading to improved talent acquisition and retention rates. This competitive advantage compels HEIs to continually refine their TM practices to remain ahead of their peers. In response to the growing pressure to sustain competitiveness, institutions frequently adopt innovative TM practices, including advanced recruitment strategies, thorough onboarding programmes, and ongoing PD (Porter, 2020; Barney, Ketchen & Wright, 2021). Aligning TM practices with market trends and competitor strategies thus enhances an institution's appeal to top-tier talent and fosters a culture of continuous improvement (McKinsey, 2021; BCG, 2022).

3.5.1.2 Cultural and Societal Values

Cultural and societal values play a significant role in shaping TM practices within HEIs. With a growing emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), institutions are increasingly adopting inclusive TM practices that reflect these values (Ahmed, 2021; Taylor & Simmonds, 2022). Institutions that embed DEI into their strategic vision and operational policies are better positioned to attract and retain a diverse talent pool. For instance, prioritising diversity can significantly enhance an institution's reputation, making it more appealing to prospective employees who value inclusive work environments.

Cultural values also influence employee engagement and overall organisational culture. Universities that align their TM practices with values such as collaboration, respect, and continuous learning can foster a supportive and dynamic work environment (Schein, 2020; Cameron & Quinn, 2021). This alignment can significantly enhance employee satisfaction and contribute to the institution's long-term success. For instance, a culture that promotes continuous learning and innovation boosts employee engagement and aids in retention, as employees are more likely to stay with an organisation that supports their professional growth and development (Schein, 2020). Integrating cultural values into TM practices helps create an

organisational environment that attracts top talent and supports retention, ultimately contributing to the institution's effectiveness and sustainability.

3.5.1.3 Global Workforce Trends

Global workforce trends, including increased talent and remote work, are reshaping TM practices in HEIs. Institutions must adapt their recruitment and retention strategies to attract global talent and accommodate flexible working arrangements (Deloitte, 2021; Gartner, 2022). The ability to offer remote work options can significantly expand an institution's talent pool by attracting professionals who might not be willing or able to relocate, thus broadening the institution's reach and enhancing its ability to recruit top talent from diverse geographical locations.

Additionally, the global shift towards digitalisation and technological advancements affects TM practices. Institutions that effectively integrate digital tools and platforms into their TM processes can enhance efficiency and provide better support for their workforce (PwC, 2021; McKinsey, 2022). For example, adopting advanced recruitment software and online training platforms enables HEIs to streamline their TM processes, improve the employee experience, and maintain a competitive edge in the global HE market. Embracing technological advancements allows institutions to stay relevant and competitive by optimising their TM practices and leveraging the benefits of digitalisation (PwC, 2021; McKinsey, 2022).

3.5.1.4 Market Dynamics and Economic Factors

Market dynamics, such as fluctuations in supply and demand for academic talent, significantly influence TM practices within HEIs. Institutions must navigate changing job markets and adjust their TM strategies accordingly (World Bank, 2020; IMF, 2021). For instance, during periods of high demand for academic professionals, HEIs may need to enhance their recruitment efforts and offer more attractive compensation packages to secure top talent. Conversely, during economic downturns, institutions may face budget constraints that affect their ability to invest in TM initiatives. These economic conditions necessitate flexible and strategic planning to align TM practices with current market realities.

Economic factors, such as funding availability and budget constraints, also play a crucial role in shaping TM practices. Institutions with solid financial health can invest more substantially in TM initiatives, including recruitment, training, and employee support programmes (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). On the other hand, institutions facing financial challenges may need to prioritise cost-effective strategies, such as implementing low-cost training programmes or seeking alternative funding sources. Effective financial management and strategic planning are vital for maintaining robust TM practices in varying economic conditions. Institutions that can manage their resources effectively are better positioned to sustain their TM efforts and continue to attract and retain talent despite financial constraints (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2022).

3.5.1.5 Regulatory Frameworks

Regulatory frameworks, including national education policies and accreditation standards, significantly shape TM practices in HEIs. Institutions must comply with regulatory requirements to ensure quality and maintain accreditation status, enhancing their reputation and attractiveness to students and administrators (Marginson, 2020a; Altbach, 2004). Adherence to these regulations supports institutional goals by providing a framework for maintaining high standards and ensuring institutional accountability. For example, compliance with accreditation standards can improve an institution's credibility and make it more appealing to potential employees who value working for reputable and compliant organisations.

Regulatory changes can prompt institutions to update their TM policies and practices to align with new standards and expectations. Staying informed about regulatory developments and engaging with policymakers helps universities align their TM strategies with national and international standards (Taylor & Simmonds, 2021; Ahmed, 2022). Institutions that proactively address regulatory changes can ensure that their TM practices remain effective and compliant, supporting their institutional goals and maintaining their competitive edge. This adaptability is crucial for navigating the evolving regulatory landscape and ensuring that TM practices meet best practices and regulatory requirements (Taylor & Simmonds, 2021; Ahmed, 2022).

3.5.1.6 Effective Resource Management

Effective resource management and allocation are critical for supporting TM practices within HEIs. Institutions must strategically allocate resources to support recruitment, development, and retention initiatives (Schiemann, 2022; Ulrich, 2021). Adequate funding for PD, performance incentives, and support services enhances the institution's ability to attract and retain top talent. For example, investing in training and development programmes can improve employee skills and contribute to overall organisational success. Proper resource allocation ensures that TM practices are well-supported and sustainable, enabling institutions to respond to emerging talent needs and adapt to changes in the external environment (Schiemann, 2022; Ulrich, 2021).

Resource management also involves optimising the use of technology and infrastructure to support TM practices. Investments in digital platforms, learning management systems, and collaborative tools enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of TM processes (Gartner, 2021; PwC, 2022). By leveraging resources effectively, universities can create a supportive environment that fosters TD and organisational success. For instance, implementing advanced technology solutions can streamline TM processes, improve the employee experience, and contribute to the institution's competitive advantage. Therefore, effective resource management involves financial investments and the strategic use of technology to enhance TM practices and support the institution's goals (Gartner, 2021; PwC, 2022).

Barriers to Talent Management

3.5.2 External Factors Restraining TM Policies and Practices

This section explores the external factors that pose significant challenges to effectively implementing TM policies and practices within HEIs. The external environment in which HEIs operate is often characterised by rapid technological change, economic constraints, and competitive market dynamics, which impact institutions' ability to attract, retain, and develop top talent.

The subsections below address critical external challenges, including innovation and development barriers, competition for talent, economic constraints, organisational culture, rigid policies, and the fast-paced technological landscape. Additionally, the perception of fairness within TM practices is examined as an external issue that affects employee engagement and retention.

3.5.2.1 Innovation and Development Challenges

Innovation and development challenges restrain TM practices within HEIs. Limited access to cutting-edge technology and research funding may impede an institution's ability to attract and retain top talent seeking opportunities for growth and advancement (Deloitte, 2020; McKinsey, 2021). Institutions that lack up-to-date facilities and technological infrastructure may struggle to offer the resources and support that high-calibre professionals expect. This limitation can deter potential candidates and affect current administrators, who may seek environments that provide the necessary tools and resources for their PD and innovation.

Addressing these challenges requires strategic investments in research infrastructure and technology. Institutions must allocate resources effectively to upgrade their facilities and technology to remain competitive and foster an environment conducive to innovation (Senge, 2019; Kotter, 2020). A culture of innovation, which encourages experimentation and creativity, is essential for attracting and retaining innovative thinkers and researchers. Institutions that fail to cultivate such an environment may struggle to implement effective TM practices, as they will lack the capacity to support cutting-edge R&D, leading to a cycle of stagnation and difficulty in attracting top talent.

3.5.2.2 Intense Competition for Talent

The intense competition for top talent poses a significant challenge for TM practices. HEIs must compete with local and global institutions for a limited pool of qualified candidates, making it challenging to attract and retain high-calibre administrators and faculty (Porter, 2020; Barney et al., 2021). This competition can lead to increased salary demands and heightened expectations for PD opportunities. Institutions must distinguish themselves through unique value propositions and competitive compensation packages as they compete for top talent.

Developing a strong employer brand is crucial for attracting and retaining top talent. Institutions that offer clear career progression paths, opportunities for professional growth, and a supportive work environment are more likely to appeal to high-calibre candidates (Lawler, 2020; Armstrong, 2021). Effective TM

strategies must account for the competitive landscape and adapt to changing market dynamics. Institutions that articulate their unique strengths and offer compelling career opportunities are better positioned to attract and retain the best talent amidst fierce competition.

3.5.2.3 Economic Constraints

Economic constraints, such as budget cuts and funding limitations, present significant challenges for TM practices. Institutions facing financial difficulties may need to reduce spending on recruitment, PD, and employee support programmes (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). These constraints can impact an institution's ability to attract and retain talent, leading to staff shortages and decreased morale.

Assessing economic constraints requires strategic financial planning and resource optimisation. Institutions must prioritise cost-effective TM strategies and seek alternative funding sources to support talent initiatives (World Bank, 2020; IMF, 2021). For example, institutions might focus on implementing low-cost training programmes or leveraging partnerships and grants to fund PD initiatives. Effective management of economic challenges is crucial for maintaining robust TM practices and ensuring institutional sustainability.

3.5.2.4 Organisational Culture

Organisational culture can either support or hinder TM practices. A culture that resists change, lacks inclusivity, or fails to value employee contributions can negatively impact talent acquisition and retention efforts (Schein, 2020; Cameron & Quinn, 2021). Institutions with rigid hierarchies and limited opportunities for collaboration may struggle to implement effective TM practices, as they may fail to create an environment that supports employee engagement and development.

Creating a positive organisational culture requires leadership commitment and active engagement by administrators. Encouraging open communication, promoting DEI, and recognising employee achievements are essential for fostering a supportive work environment (Hofstede, 2001; Kotter, 2021). Institutions that do not address cultural barriers may face challenges in implementing effective TM practices, as a negative culture can undermine employee morale and hinder organisational growth.

3.5.2.5 Rigid Policies and Regulations

Rigid policies and regulations can restrict the flexibility needed for effective TM practices. Institutions bound by stringent regulatory requirements may encounter difficulties adapting their TM strategies to meet evolving needs (Marginson, 2020b; Altbach, 2004). Compliance with these regulations can also consume significant administrative resources, diverting attention from strategic TM initiatives.

To address these challenges, institutions must stay informed about regulatory changes and engage in proactive policy advocacy. Developing flexible TM policies that comply with regulations while allowing for innovation and adaptation is essential for maintaining competitive TM practices (Taylor & Simmonds, 2021; Ahmed, 2022). Balancing regulatory compliance with strategic flexibility is vital to effective TM

implementation, enabling institutions to navigate the regulatory landscape while pursuing their strategic goals.

3.5.2.6 Technological Changes

Rapid technological changes present both opportunities and challenges for TM practices. While technology can enhance efficiency and effectiveness, staying alongside technological advancements requires continuous investment and adaptation (Deloitte, 2021; Gartner, 2022). Institutions that fail to keep pace with technological changes may struggle to attract and retain tech-savvy talent, as prospective and current employees may seek environments that offer up-to-date technological resources and opportunities for digital innovation.

Addressing technological challenges involves investing in digital infrastructure and providing ongoing staff training. Embracing new technologies and fostering a culture of digital innovation can enhance TM practices and position institutions as leaders in the HE sector (PwC, 2021; McKinsey, 2022). Institutions that invest in technology and encourage digital skills development are better positioned to sustain effective TM strategies and remain competitive in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

3.5.2.7 Perceived Unfairness

Perceived unfairness in TM practices, such as favouritism, bias, or inequitable treatment, can undermine employee trust and engagement. Institutions that do not address issues of fairness and transparency may face challenges in retaining talent and fostering a positive organisational culture (Deci & Ryan, 2020; Kumar, 2021). Unfair practices can lead to decreased morale, increased turnover rates, and a negative reputation, which can further hinder TM efforts.

Ensuring fairness and transparency in TM practices requires clear policies, consistent communication, and robust grievance mechanisms. Institutions must actively address concerns about bias and inequity to create a supportive and inclusive work environment (Cameron & Green, 2015; Gallup, 2020). Promoting fairness is essential for maintaining employee trust, sustaining effective TM practices, and fostering a positive organisational culture that supports long-term success.

3.5.3 Internal Factors Facilitating TM Policy Implementation

This section delves into the critical internal drivers that enable the successful adoption and execution of TM policies within HEIs. It highlights several crucial elements, such as clear HR policies, effective communication, leadership support, and organisational culture. These factors work in tandem to establish a structured environment that nurtures TD, retention, and overall employee satisfaction. By focusing on internal mechanisms, the section explores how HEIs can create a conducive framework for TM, ensuring policies are aligned with institutional goals and supported by well-defined PM systems, adequate resources, and continuous training and development.

Moreover, this section emphasises the importance of compensation and incentives in motivating and retaining talent, alongside the critical role of leadership in fostering a culture of continuous improvement. By examining these internal factors, the section provides a detailed roadmap for HEIs to implement TM policies that enhance institutional performance and create a sustainable and supportive work environment for their employees.

3.5.3.1 Clear HR Policies

Clear HR policies are essential for facilitating effective TM practices within HEIs. These policies offer a structured approach to talent acquisition, development, and retention, ensuring that all processes are handled consistently and fairly (Nguyen, Nguyen & Tran, 2019). Transparent HR policies help set explicit expectations for employees, which enhances their engagement and commitment to the institution (Al-Turki & Aldehayyat, 2020). For instance, well-defined recruitment policies ensure the right talent is selected based on objective criteria, while robust PM systems facilitate ongoing skill evaluation and development (El-Farr & Al-Sinawi, 2021).

Furthermore, clear HR policies foster a culture of accountability and transparency, which is crucial for successfully implementing TM practices. When employees understand the policies and procedures that govern their work environment, they are more likely to trust the system and engage positively (Nguyen et al., 2019). This clarity helps minimise conflicts and misunderstandings, ensuring all team members are aligned with institutional goals and standards. The establishment of comprehensive HR policies supports the effective execution of TM strategies by providing a framework within which all talent-related decisions are made and communicated.

3.5.3.2 Compensation and Incentives

Compensation and incentives are fundamental in attracting and retaining talent within HEIs. Competitive salaries, comprehensive benefits, and performance-based incentives motivate employees and enhance their job satisfaction (Oladapo, 2019). Institutions that offer attractive compensation packages are better positioned to recruit high-calibre talent and reduce turnover rates (Al-Mutairi, 2021a). Effective compensation strategies include monetary rewards and non-monetary incentives such as opportunities for PD, career advancement, and recognition programmes (Oladapo, 2019).

The design of comprehensive compensation and incentive structures should address the workforce's diverse needs. For example, while some employees may prioritise salary and benefits, others may value professional growth opportunities or work-life balance more highly (Ahmed & El-Farr, 2023). By providing various incentives catering to different employee preferences, HEIs can enhance overall employee satisfaction and loyalty. Institutions must continually evaluate and adjust their compensation strategies to ensure they remain competitive and aligned with industry standards, thus supporting the retention of top talent.

3.5.3.3 Effective communication

Effective communication is critical to the successful implementation of TM policies. Transparent and open communication channels are essential for disseminating information regarding TM practices and policies, ensuring that all stakeholders are well-informed and engaged (El-Farr & Al-Sinawi, 2021). Effective communication also involves addressing concerns and feedback, which enhances trust and commitment to the institution (Nguyen et al., 2019). Regular updates and open conversations between HR departments, faculty, and administrators are crucial for continuously improving TM practices.

Effective communication fosters a collaborative and inclusive organisational culture. By keeping employees informed about available opportunities for development and growth and by recognising their contributions, institutions can enhance employee engagement and motivation (Oladapo, 2019). Effective communication helps build a positive work environment where employees feel valued and supported, which is vital for the successful implementation and sustainability of TM strategies (Ahmed & El-Farr, 2023).

3.5.3.4 Leadership Support

Leadership support is a crucial determinant of successful TM policy implementation. Leaders who are committed to TM practices create a supportive environment that encourages employee development and engagement (Al-Turki & Aldehayyat, 2020). Effective leadership also involves providing the necessary resources and support for TM initiatives, thereby ensuring their sustainability and effectiveness (El-Farr & Al-Sinawi, 2021). Leaders play a crucial role in setting the strategic direction for TM practices and aligning them with the institution's goals.

By demonstrating a commitment to employee development and fostering a supportive environment, leaders can inspire and motivate their workforce (Nguyen et al., 2019). Leadership support is also essential for overcoming resistance to change and promoting a culture of continuous improvement within the institution (Ahmed & El-Farr, 2023). Leaders who are actively involved in TM practices contribute to a positive organisational climate that facilitates the effective implementation of TM strategies and enhances overall institutional performance.

3.5.3.5 Organisational Culture and Structure

Organisational culture and structure significantly impact the implementation of TM practices. A positive organisational culture that values continuous learning and development creates an environment conducive to effective TM (Oladapo, 2019). Institutions with a culture that supports collaboration, innovation, and employee growth are better equipped to implement and sustain TM practices. This supportive culture encourages employees to take advantage of development opportunities and fosters a sense of belonging and commitment to the institution (El-Farr & Al-Sinawi, 2021).

Similarly, an organisational structure that facilitates communication and collaboration across departments enhances the implementation of TM policies (Al-Turki & Aldehayyat, 2020). A flexible and adaptive structure ensures that TM practices are integrated effectively and aligned with institutional goals

(Ahmed & El-Farr, 2023). By promoting an organisational culture that supports employee development and an adaptable structure, HEIs can create an environment that supports the successful implementation of TM strategies and drives overall institutional success.

3.5.3.6 Effective Performance Management Systems

Effective PM systems are crucial for successfully implementing TM practices. These systems provide a framework for evaluating employee performance, identifying development needs, and aligning individual goals with institutional objectives (Nguyen et al., 2019). Regular performance appraisals and feedback mechanisms are essential for monitoring progress, ensuring continuous improvement, and identifying high-potential employees who can be groomed for leadership roles (El-Farr & Al-Sinawi, 2021).

PM systems also contribute to employee engagement and motivation by recognising and rewarding their contributions. Institutions that implement robust PM systems can better support their employees' growth and development, thereby enhancing overall job satisfaction and retention (Oladapo, 2019). By providing targeted development opportunities and aligning individual performance with institutional goals, HEIs can maintain a strong talent pipeline and support the long-term success of their TM practices.

3.5.3.7 Adequate Resource Allocation

Adequate resource allocation is essential for the effective implementation of TM practices. HEIs must allocate sufficient financial, human, and technological resources to support TM initiatives (Al-Mutairi, 2021b). This includes investing in training and development programmes, recruiting additional administrators, and implementing technology solutions to streamline TM processes (Ahmed & El-Farr, 2023). Proper resource allocation ensures that TM practices are sustainable and effective in achieving their objectives.

Investing in TM initiatives demonstrates an institution's commitment to employee development and retention, which can enhance its reputation as an employer of choice (Nguyen et al., 2019). Moreover, effective resource management enables HEIs to respond to emerging talent needs and adapt to changes in the external environment (El-Farr & Al-Sinawi, 2021). By ensuring that resources are allocated effectively, institutions can create a supportive environment that fosters TD and contributes to overall organisational success.

3.5.3.8 Training and Development

Training and development are central to TM practices, enabling employees to enhance their skills and competencies (Oladapo, 2019). HEIs must provide continuous learning opportunities to ensure that their workforce remains competitive and capable of meeting evolving institutional needs (El-Farr & Al-Sinawi, 2021). Comprehensive training programmes that address both technical and soft skills are essential for employee growth and development (Nguyen et al., 2019).

Investing in training and development not only improves employee performance but also enhances job satisfaction and retention. Employees who perceive that their institution is committed to their professional

growth are more likely to remain engaged and loyal (Al-Turki & Aldehayyat, 2020). Furthermore, continuous learning opportunities help in building a culture of innovation and excellence within the institution, fostering an environment where employees are encouraged to pursue ongoing improvement and professional advancement (Ahmed & El-Farr, 2023).

Specifically, faculty and staff training focused on skill enhancement for effective technology use is critical in today's digitally transforming HEI environment. Targeted training programmes equip academic and administrative staff with the necessary capabilities to harness digital tools efficiently in teaching, research, and student support. This empowerment allows staff to improve traditional functions while optimising time and productivity (Zabalawi, Kordahji & Aftimos, 2024).

3.5.4 Internal Factors Restraining TM Policy Implementation

This section focuses on the internal factors that can hinder the successful implementation of TM policies within HEIs. Internal constraints, including cultural barriers, inadequate compensation, lack of development opportunities, limited resources, market constraints, poor communication, low employee engagement, and insufficient support from HR, play a significant role in shaping the effectiveness of TM initiatives.

3.5.4.1 Cultural Barriers

Cultural barriers within HEIs can significantly hinder the effective implementation of TM policies. These barriers often stem from entrenched organisational cultures that resist change and innovation. In many HEIs, hierarchical structures and traditional norms can impede the adoption of new TM practices (Hofstede, 2001). A culture that prioritises seniority over merit can undermine efforts to implement merit-based promotion and development programmes. Furthermore, cultural resistance to feedback and performance evaluations can stifle open communication and continuous improvement (Schein, 2017).

Cultural barriers are particularly pronounced due to the interplay between local customs and institutional norms. The emphasis on maintaining harmonious relationships and avoiding confrontation can lead to a reluctance to provide constructive feedback, which is crucial for effective TM practices (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). Additionally, societal preference for stability and continuity over change can result in resistance to new TM policies and practices, hindering their successful implementation (Al-Mutawa & Richards, 2020).

3.5.4.2 Inadequate Compensation

Inadequate compensation is a critical internal factor that can restrain the implementation of TM policies in HEIs. Competitive compensation packages are essential to attract and retain top talent, yet many institutions struggle to offer salaries and benefits that match industry standards (Brown & Reilly, 2021). Budget constraints and competing financial priorities often limit the ability of HEIs to provide adequate compensation, leading to talent attrition and challenges in recruiting highly skilled professionals.

Compensation disparities can be particularly problematic given the high cost of living and the competitive job market (Al-Omari & Hamed, 2020). When administrators and faculty perceive their compensation as inadequate, their motivation and engagement levels may decline, negatively impacting their performance and commitment to the institution (Kouzes & Posner, 2019).

3.5.4.3 Lack of development opportunities

A lack of development opportunities within HEIs can significantly impede the successful implementation of TM policies. PD is a critical component of effective TM, enabling employees to enhance their skills, stay updated with industry trends, and advance their careers (Guskey, 2020). However, many institutions face challenges in providing adequate training and development programmes due to budget limitations, resource constraints, and insufficient support from leadership (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart & Wright, 2020).

The scarcity of development opportunities is often intensified by a lack of strategic planning and investment in professional growth (Al-Tamimi & Al-Hashmi, 2019). Without clear pathways for career advancement and continuous learning, employees may feel undervalued and disengaged, leading to higher turnover rates and reduced organisational effectiveness (Wright & McMahan, 2021).

3.5.4.4 Limited Resources

Limited resources are a significant internal factor that can hinder the implementation of TM policies in HEIs. Resource constraints can manifest in various forms, including inadequate funding, insufficient staffing, and lack of access to necessary technology and infrastructure (Bolman & Deal, 2017). These limitations can impede the ability of institutions to execute comprehensive TM strategies that encompass recruitment, development, and retention of top talent.

Resource limitations are often a consequence of budgetary constraints and competing institutional priorities (Al-Habsi & Al-Muharrami, 2018). For example, limited funding may restrict the availability of training programmes, PD initiatives, and competitive compensation packages, all of which are critical components of effective TM practices (Torraco, 2018).

3.5.4.5 Market Constraints

Market constraints, including labour market dynamics and competitive pressures, can significantly impact the implementation of TM policies in HEIs. The availability of skilled talent, market demand for specific expertise, and competitive job offers from other sectors influence the effectiveness of TM strategies (Cappelli, 2019). In a competitive labour market, HEIs must compete with private sector organisations that often offer more attractive compensation and career advancement opportunities (Barney & Wright, 2019).

In the context of Kuwaiti HEIs, market constraints are influenced by the national economy's reliance on oil revenues and efforts to diversify into knowledge-based sectors (Al-Enezi & Al-Mutawa, 2020). The competition for skilled professionals in emerging fields such as technology and engineering can make it challenging for HEIs to attract and retain top talent (Schuler & Tarique, 2019).

3.5.4.6 Poor Communication

Poor communication within HEIs can significantly hinder the implementation of TM policies. Effective communication is essential for ensuring that employees understand the goals, processes, and benefits of TM initiatives (Clampitt, Smith & Williams, 2016). However, many institutions struggle with fragmented communication channels, unclear messaging, and lack of transparency, which can lead to misunderstandings and resistance to change (Tourish, 2020).

Communication challenges are often compounded by hierarchical organisational structures and cultural norms that discourage open dialogue (Al-Qudah & Al-Omari, 2019). When employees are not adequately informed about TM policies and their implications, they may be less likely to engage with and support these initiatives (Robbins & Judge, 2019).

3.5.4.7 Poor Employee Engagement and Morale

Poor employee engagement and morale can significantly impede the effective implementation of TM policies in HEIs. Engagement is crucial for motivating employees to participate in TM initiatives and contribute to the institution's success (Kahn, 1990). However, factors such as inadequate recognition, lack of development opportunities, and limited career advancement prospects can lead to disengagement and low morale (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Cultural and organisational factors that prioritise stability over innovation and change often impair engagement and morale (Al-Kandari & Al-Bahrani, 2019). When employees feel undervalued and disconnected from the institution's goals, their commitment and productivity decline, negatively impacting the success of TM initiatives (Saks, 2006).

3.5.4.8 Resistance to Change

Resistance to change is a significant internal issue that can hinder the implementation of TM policies in HEIs. Change resistance often stems from fear of the unknown, loss of control, and disruption of established routines and practices (Kotter, 1996). When employees perceive TM initiatives as threatening or disruptive, they may resist adopting new processes and behaviours, undermining the success of these initiatives (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999).

Cultural norms that prioritise stability and continuity over innovation and experimentation often influence resistance to change (Al-Kandari & Hama, 2018). Addressing resistance requires a strategic approach that involves clear communication, inclusive participation, and effective change management (CM) practices to build support and commitment to TM initiatives (Cameron & Green, 2015).

3.5.4.9 Unfavourable Work Environment

An unfavourable work environment can significantly impede the implementation of TM policies in HEIs. Work environment factors such as inadequate facilities, lack of support, and poor organisational climate can negatively impact employee morale, productivity, and engagement (Oldham & Hackman, 2010). When

employees perceive their work environment as unsupportive or hostile, they are less likely to engage with and support TM initiatives (Schneider et al., 2017).

Challenges related to the work environment are often influenced by factors such as resource limitations, cultural norms, and organisational structures that prioritise hierarchy over collaboration (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). Creating a supportive and conducive work environment requires a focus on enhancing physical facilities, promoting a positive organisational climate, and fostering a culture of collaboration and support (Hogan & Coote, 2014).

3.6 Stakeholders in Talent Management

Alumni associations and community stakeholders play a significant role in the implementation of TM practices in HEIs. Alumni associations provide valuable networks, resources, and support for current administrators, faculty, and students, enhancing the institution's ability to attract and retain top talent (Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Engaging alumni in TM initiatives can provide valuable insights, mentorship opportunities, and financial support, contributing to the overall success of the institution (Taylor & Martin, 2019). Alumni serve as role models, mentors, and advocates, providing valuable support and guidance for administrators, faculty, and students (Saks, 2006).

Employer networks are critical stakeholders in implementing TM practices in HEIs. Effective employer engagement provides valuable insights into industry needs, trends, and opportunities, enabling institutions to tailor their TM initiatives to meet the demands of the job market (Jackson, 2019). Collaborating with employers can enhance the relevance and impact of educational programmes, providing students with valuable work experience, internships, and job opportunities (Knight, 2019).

Industry representatives play a vital role in the implementation of TM practices in HEIs. Engaging industry representatives in the development and delivery of educational programmes ensures that curricula are aligned with market demands and industry standards (Tynjälä, 2018). Industry representatives can provide valuable insights into emerging trends, skills requirements, and opportunities, enhancing the relevance and impact of TM initiatives (Jackson, 2019).

Student unions and organisations are critical stakeholders in the implementation of TM practices in HEIs. Engaging students in TM initiatives provides valuable insights into their needs, preferences, and aspirations, ensuring that TM practices are aligned with student expectations (Astin, 1999). Student unions and organisations can serve as important channels for communication, feedback, and collaboration, enhancing the overall effectiveness of TM initiatives (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Government and regulatory bodies are critical stakeholders in the implementation of TM practices in HEIs. Government policies and regulations provide the framework within which HEIs operate, influencing the development and implementation of TM initiatives (Mintzberg, 1996). Collaborating with government and

regulatory bodies ensures that TM practices are aligned with national priorities, standards, and regulations (Kezar, 2018).

Professional associations are essential stakeholders in implementing TM practices in HEIs. Engaging with professional associations provides valuable insights into industry standards, best practices, and emerging trends, enhancing the relevance and impact of TM initiatives (Tynjälä, 2018). Professional associations can also provide opportunities for PD, certification, and networking, supporting the career development of students and faculty (Jackson, 2019).

Institutional and cultural influences are significant factors in the implementation of TM practices in HEIs. Institutional culture, values, and norms shape the attitudes and behaviours of employees, influencing the effectiveness of TM initiatives (Kotter, 1996). Understanding and addressing institutional and cultural influences is essential for developing TM practices that are aligned with the unique context and needs of the institution (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999).

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are essential stakeholders in the implementation of TM practices in HEIs. Engaging with NGOs provides valuable insights into social and environmental issues, enhancing the relevance and impact of TM initiatives (Weerts & Ronca, 2008). NGOs can also provide support and resources for community engagement, sustainability initiatives, and social responsibility programmes (Taylor & Martin, 2019).

3.7 Talent Management Research in the Higher Education Sector: A Global Perspective

As has been shown above, TM has attracted both theoretical and empirical attention in HRM and general management literature in the last decade because of its centrality in overall strategy and the impact it has on institutional effectiveness, innovation and quality of teaching and research in HEIs. In the global context, themes analysed concerning TM research in the HE sector cover such areas as faculty and staff acquisition and management, leadership and engagement, and external and internal antecedents of TM. This section presents an evaluation of mainstream TM research in the HE sector, conducted worldwide, trends noticed and gaps that other studies can fill.

3.7.1 Academic Recruitment and Retention

TM continues to be a central focus in HE, with research highlighting faculty recruitment and retention as primary concerns. As argued by Tight (2020), the competition to attract top-tier academic talent has intensified due to globalisation and specialisation, particularly in regions such as North America and Europe. These university systems engage in various strategies to stay competitive, such as offering competitive salaries, PD opportunities, and fostering research partnerships. Despite these strategies, challenges remain, particularly regarding the retention of early-career scholars. Hakala (2021) points out

that many young academics face barriers such as excessive work demands, job insecurity, and unclear promotion pathways, all of which contribute to dissatisfaction and high turnover rates.

In many parts of the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and some regions of Asia, faculty recruitment and retention strategies face additional challenges. One significant issue is the limited availability of resources, which impacts staff development and affects the long-term sustainability of TM efforts in these regions (Kuuyelleh et al., 2022). The issue of brain drain, where skilled academics move to institutions in developed countries, is particularly prevalent. As Chika and Oyetunde (2019) have noted, limited funding, inadequate staff development programs, and poor working conditions are major hurdles to the effective implementation of TM in African HEIs. Additionally, the disparity in resources between developed and developing nations exacerbates the retention challenges, as faculty in the latter often seek better opportunities abroad. This issue highlights the importance of designing TM strategies that address not only the immediate needs of faculty members but also the broader structural challenges faced by HEIs in different regions (Hakala, 2021).

To address these challenges, scholars suggest that TM in HE must focus on creating environments where faculty feel supported, valued, and provided with opportunities for growth and advancement. This includes enhancing job security, offering clearer career progression pathways, and reducing work-related stressors. Moreover, institutions are urged to invest in faculty development programs that are specifically tailored to the needs of early-career scholars, with a particular emphasis on work-life balance, mentorship, and providing clear paths for promotion (Tight, 2020).

3.7.2 Academic Leadership Development

TM has become increasingly one of the most critical success factors in the HE sector. A significant component of TM within HEIs is leadership development, which encompasses the preparation of faculty and administrators to take on leadership roles in response to challenges such as digital transformation, financial pressures, and global competitiveness. As noted by Bryman and Lilley (2022), leadership development programs should be designed to foster leaders who are adaptable, strategic thinkers, and capable of leading institutions through periods of significant change. These programs must also emphasise the importance of collaboration between the academic and administrative divisions of universities, enhancing a more holistic approach to leadership.

In the UK and Australia, structured leadership development programs have become a hallmark of TM strategies within HEIs. These programs often include elements such as mentorship, international exposure, and scenario-based learning, all of which help cultivate the skills necessary for effective leadership (Bryman & Lilley, 2022). Furthermore, these programs are designed to prepare future leaders for the challenges associated with increasing competition in HE, the need for innovation, and the integration of technology in academic environments. While these initiatives have been successful in some contexts,

there are still significant challenges related to the underrepresentation of minority groups, particularly women and individuals from racial or ethnic minority backgrounds.

Morley (2021) highlighted that women and underrepresented groups continue to face challenges in both the hiring and promotion processes within HEIs, with these challenges being particularly acute in leadership roles. Women, for example, often encounter gender biases that impede their advancement, while racial and ethnic minorities frequently face systemic barriers to career progression. This underrepresentation in leadership roles is not only a matter of social justice but also impacts the quality of decision-making and the inclusiveness of leadership within HEIs. These issues underscore the need for leadership development programs to prioritise diversity and inclusion, ensuring that individuals from all backgrounds have equal opportunities to advance into leadership positions (Morley, 2021).

Studies have shown that diverse leadership teams lead to better decision-making, more innovative ideas, and improved organisational performance. For instance, McKinsey & Company (2021) found that organisations with more diverse leadership teams are 33% more likely to outperform their peers in terms of profitability. In the context of HE, a similar approach to diversity in leadership could help foster a more inclusive academic environment, which in turn could improve institutional outcomes. Therefore, it is crucial that TM strategies in HE include initiatives that actively support the PD of underrepresented groups, ensuring that leadership development programs are accessible to all.

Moreover, leadership development within HE must go beyond traditional leadership training programs and involve creating an environment that supports the continuous growth of leaders at all levels. According to Northouse (2021), leadership development should be a dynamic, ongoing process that aligns with institutional goals and adapts to emerging challenges. This includes fostering leadership competencies in areas such as strategic planning, CM, and digital fluency, all of which are essential for navigating the rapidly evolving landscape of HE.

3.7.3 Employee Engagement and Retention

Another area discussed in the TM research within the HE sector is employee engagement. Active faculty and staff contribute to the achievement of institutional objectives, improve student performance and organisational commitment. The work done on HE employee engagement by Hakanen et al. (2019) revealed that work-life balance, workplace autonomy as well as organisational support contribute to engagement levels.

There is, though, an increasing tendency to acknowledge the importance of a segmented approach and to distinguish the approach to engage academic staff from other staffs. For instance, Shuck et al. (2020) state that previous academic corporate engagement approaches may not fit with academia's freedom to learn and desire to be motivated intrinsically. This brings focus on the need for HE-specific TM frameworks that focus on such values.

3.7.4 External and Internal Influences on Talent Management

TM is influenced by a combination of external and internal factors that shape how HEIs develop and implement their TM practices. These forces create opportunities and challenges that impact how institutions attract, retain, and develop talent. External factors generally refer to broader conditions that are beyond the control of individual institutions, such as sociopolitical, technological, economic, and competitive forces. Internal factors, on the other hand, relate to organisational policies, leadership, culture, and available resources within the institution.

3.7.4.1 External Influences

External influences can shape the direction and efficacy of TM practices in significant ways. These factors include global rankings, funding, sociopolitical trends, technological advancements, and market competition. Global rankings and accreditation standards are critical external factors that influence how universities approach TM. Institutions often strive to maintain or improve their standing in international rankings, as these rankings directly impact their reputation and attractiveness to international faculty and students. According to Marginson (2021), the pursuit of global legitimacy often drives universities to adopt standardised TM practices. For example, universities may prioritise hiring international faculty, developing strong research programs, or enhancing diversity initiatives to meet the expectations set by global rankings. However, this emphasis on standardisation can inadvertently marginalise localised solutions tailored to specific institutional and cultural needs, particularly in non-Western contexts (Marginson, 2021). The drive for global competitiveness can sometimes overshadow the need for TM strategies that align with the unique priorities of individual institutions or regional contexts.

Funding is another critical external factor influencing TM. Government policies, institutional budgets, philanthropic contributions, and other financial resources directly impact the extent to which HEIs can invest in TM strategies. In resource-constrained environments, many institutions struggle to retain top talent, particularly when compensation packages and career development opportunities fall short. As Chika and Oyetunde (2019) point out, in many developing countries, this issue is exacerbated by brain drain, where skilled faculty members leave for better opportunities in wealthier, developed countries. Similarly, research from Kim and Fernandez (2020) illustrates how HEIs in South Korea face challenges in competing for faculty talent against institutions in more affluent countries, with disparities in resource allocation further widening the gap between institutions in developed and developing regions.

Sociopolitical factors, including government policies, national priorities, and regulatory frameworks, are significant external influences on TM practices. For example, in Kuwait, the national policy of Kuwaitisation focuses on increasing the representation of local talent within the workforce. This has led HEIs to adopt TM strategies that prioritise the recruitment and retention of Kuwaiti nationals while balancing the need for global competitiveness (Johnson et al., 2022). However, technological trends, particularly the integration of digital tools and hybrid work models, have forced institutions to adapt their TM practices. As Johnson et al. (2022) note, these trends have led to a more flexible and digital TM approach. As Johnson et al. (2022) note, these trends have led to a more flexible and digital TM approach. As Johnson et al. (2022) note, these trends have led to a more flexible and digital TM approach.

al. (2022) highlight, the increasing reliance on digital platforms and online learning has necessitated the development of new TM frameworks that include digital upskilling initiatives, especially for faculty members who may need to enhance their technical competencies to deliver effective online instruction. This is especially true in the post-pandemic era, where digital proficiency is now a key component of academic leadership.

The competitive landscape in HE plays a major role in shaping TM practices. As HEIs compete for top-tier faculty and students, they are pushed to innovate in their TM strategies by offering unique value propositions. This can include state-of-the-art facilities, prestigious research collaborations, or access to industry networks. For instance, global universities with more robust funding structures can offer more attractive compensation packages and research opportunities than their counterparts in resource-limited regions (Kim & Fernandez, 2020). This competition is not just between universities in developed countries but also between universities in emerging markets and those in established educational hubs. As a result, institutions must continuously refine their TM strategies to ensure they remain competitive in the global talent marketplace.

Globalisation also influences TM practices by encouraging international collaboration and knowledge exchange. Institutions are increasingly partnering with foreign universities, research institutes, and industry leaders to offer global exposure to their students and faculty (Marginson, 2021). These collaborations often require institutions to reassess their TM practices to ensure they can meet the demands of an internationalised academic environment. This includes offering faculty development programs that emphasise cross-cultural competencies and encouraging faculty mobility to strengthen global partnerships.

The global shift in demographics, particularly the aging population in many countries, also influences TM practices in HE. With an aging academic workforce in regions such as Europe and North America, institutions are focusing on attracting younger talent to maintain sustainability and innovation (Hakala, 2021). Moreover, the growing emphasis on diversity and inclusion has led many institutions to revise their recruitment and retention strategies to attract a broader range of talent. This shift is particularly evident in the growing efforts to recruit more women and underrepresented groups into leadership and academic roles.

3.7.4.2 Internal Influences

While external factors certainly shape TM practices, internal factors—such as leadership, organisational culture, HR policies, and resource availability—also play a pivotal role in determining the effectiveness of TM initiatives. Effective TM practices are often closely tied to institutional leadership. Leadership commitment to TD can make a significant difference in the success of TM programs. According to Bryman and Lilley (2022), leadership support is crucial for creating an institutional culture that values PD, innovation, and career progression. Leaders within the institution must not only endorse TM strategies but

also actively engage in their implementation by providing adequate resources, mentoring faculty, and fostering a culture of collaboration between academic and administrative staff.

Internal organisational culture and HR policies can either enable or hinder the success of TM strategies. Institutions with a culture of continuous learning, innovation, and openness to change are better positioned to attract and retain top talent. HR policies that provide clear career advancement opportunities, equitable compensation, and PD programs are essential for sustaining effective TM practices (Northouse, 2021). Conversely, rigid bureaucratic structures or outdated HR policies can stifle creativity and discourage talented individuals from joining or staying at an institution.

The availability of financial, technological, and human resources is another key internal factor that impacts TM. As noted by Chika and Oyetunde (2019), in developing regions where resources are limited, HEIs may struggle to offer competitive compensation packages or fund PD programs, leading to challenges in retaining talented faculty. In contrast, well-resourced institutions are better positioned to provide comprehensive TM strategies that include research grants, faculty development programs, and attractive career progression pathways.

3.7.5 Emerging Trends

As HEIs continue to navigate a rapidly evolving global landscape, several emerging trends and research gaps have been identified in the field of TM. These trends reflect the changing dynamics within HE, driven by technological advancements, societal shifts, and the growing need for adaptability in the face of external challenges.

The increasing reliance on digital tools and technologies in teaching, learning, research, and administration is reshaping the landscape of HE. Digital transformation is now an essential component of TM, as universities must ensure that their faculty and staff possess the necessary digital competencies to thrive in a technologically driven environment. According to Johnson et al. (2022), digital competency has become a key priority for TM strategies, particularly in a post-pandemic world where remote and hybrid models of teaching and learning are increasingly common. This transformation extends beyond teaching to include administrative functions, where digital tools facilitate streamlined operations, data management, and communication. For TM to be effective, universities must incorporate digital skills training into their PD programs and ensure that staff are equipped to handle the evolving technological landscape. The growing demand for technological expertise also highlights the importance of recruiting faculty members with a strong digital aptitude, as well as developing internal talent to fill emerging roles in digital education and administration.

Diversity and inclusion have become key priorities for TM in many HEIs, driven by a global commitment to ensuring equitable representation across faculty, staff, and student populations. However, while there is broad acceptance of diversity programs as necessary components of TM, their implementation and

effectiveness remain inconsistent. Ahmed (2021) argue that diversity initiatives should go beyond token gestures and should focus on creating genuinely inclusive environments that foster meaningful participation and belonging for all members of the academic community. For example, diversity efforts should not simply focus on meeting numerical targets for underrepresented groups but should also address structural and cultural barriers that hinder full inclusion. This requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses recruitment, retention, and PD, with a specific focus on increasing representation in leadership roles. In particular, efforts should be made to develop a more diverse pipeline of talent in academia, as underrepresentation of certain groups in faculty and leadership positions continues to be a significant challenge (Morley, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted global mobility, challenging the traditional model of attracting international talent to HEIs. With travel restrictions and the shift to remote working, universities were forced to rethink their reliance on internationally mobile academic staff. Huang et al. (2021) suggest that while international mobility has been a hallmark of global TM in HE, the pandemic has highlighted the vulnerabilities of this model, particularly in terms of dependency on overseas talent. In light of this, many institutions have started to invest in cultivating local talent and reducing their reliance on international recruitment. This trend reflects a broader shift towards developing more robust domestic pipelines of skilled academic and administrative staff. Additionally, some institutions have embraced hybrid or fully remote work arrangements for faculty, enabling them to tap into a global talent pool without the need for physical relocation. These shifts in global mobility reflect a need for more sustainable and resilient TM practices, which can adapt to changing geopolitical and global health circumstances.

Although there has been considerable research on TM in the HE context, several theoretical gaps remain. Current research has predominantly relied on frameworks such as the resource-based view (RBV) and institutional theory to examine TM practices. These theories, while useful, often overlook the unique characteristics of the HE sector, such as its dual mission of teaching and research. As such, there is a growing call for more holistic conceptual frameworks that capture the specific dynamics and complexities of TM in HE. Scholars have noted the need for models that integrate elements of both academic and administrative leadership and that consider the diverse roles played by faculty members across different academic disciplines (Tight, 2020). In particular, the RBV, which focuses on the acquisition and management of valuable resources, may be limited in its application to the educational context, where talent is not only a resource but also a key driver of innovation and knowledge creation. Similarly, institutional theory, which emphasises the role of institutional pressures and norms, may fail to account for the agency of individuals within HEIs, particularly faculty members who have significant autonomy in their research and teaching practices (Bryman & Lilley, 2022). This highlights the need for a more nuanced theoretical framework that captures both the structural and individual dimensions of TM in HE.

Emerging trends also point to the growing importance of workforce agility and resilience in HE. As institutions face increasing pressures to respond to external disruptions, whether technological, financial,

or societal, there is a need for a more agile and resilient workforce. This is particularly evident in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, where universities had to quickly adapt to online learning environments and rapidly changing health guidelines. Research by Bryman and Lilley (2022) suggests that institutions are increasingly focusing on developing leadership and faculty that can navigate these changes with flexibility and resilience. This shift requires a strategic rethinking of TM practices to prioritise adaptability, crisis management skills, and the ability to innovate in the face of uncertainty.

Sustainability has become an important issue for universities globally, not only in terms of environmental impact but also in terms of social and organisational sustainability. TM strategies now need to address the long-term well-being of faculty members, including their mental health, work-life balance, and career progression (Morley, 2021). Additionally, the role of HEIs in promoting social responsibility has gained greater prominence, with many institutions aligning their TM strategies with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This trend has led to a greater emphasis on ethical recruitment practices, diversity, and community engagement as part of the broader TM framework (Tight, 2020).

The increasing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data analytics in HE has significant implications for TM. AI can assist in the recruitment process by analysing large datasets to identify potential candidates who meet specific criteria. Additionally, data-driven decision-making is helping institutions assess the effectiveness of their TM practices and refine their strategies over time. For example, AI-powered tools are being used to track faculty performance, monitor career development progress, and predict faculty turnover (Johnson et al., 2022). While AI presents many opportunities for enhancing TM, it also raises questions about fairness, transparency, and the potential for algorithmic bias in decision-making processes.

3.8 Talent Management Effectiveness in the Middle East

In this section we examine research on TM in the Middle East. We will identify that TM has received considerable interest in the last decade, especially in the Middle Eastern Region, owing to its importance in regional development goals such as GCC country's visions for 2030. In HE, TM is generally regarded as a fundamental platform for building a quality professional pool and stimulating innovation to enhance international competitiveness. However, conscious systemic efforts at TM research in the Middle East are still emerging, and empirical investigation has shown a mix of results and deficits.

3.8.1 Focus on Organisational Challenges

Research has suggested several challenges that affect the effectiveness of TM in Middle Eastern organisations, particularly in HE. These challenges are often attributed to cultural factors, organisational structures, and the reliance on expatriates. Al Ariss et al. (2016) argue that while the concept of TM is appreciated, its adoption in the Middle East lacks strategic alignment and is often shaped by power relations and collectivistic values within organisations. The top-down decision-making culture and the

emphasis on family and tribal affiliations can inhibit the identification and retention of talent in HEIs, leading to inefficiencies in TM practices. For example, faculty recruitment processes may favour personal relationships over merit-based criteria, limiting the potential to attract top-tier talent. Additionally, the region's reliance on expatriates complicates long-term talent retention and capacity building, as local talent may be overlooked in favour of international staff who may not remain in the region long term (Kaufman et al., 2021). These will be examined below.

3.8.1.1 Government Initiatives and Nationalisation Policies

The push for TD in the Middle East has been significantly shaped by nationalisation policies aimed at increasing local workforce participation in key sectors. Policies such as Emiratisation in the UAE and Saudisation in Saudi Arabia have accelerated the focus on TM within the region's HE sectors. According to Forstenlechner et al. (2013), these policies have led to a two-fold approach: institutions aim to attract local talent while retaining key expatriates to maintain a competitive edge at the international level. In the context of HE, this dual approach creates challenges in balancing the need for global academic standards with the desire to develop a domestic academic workforce. For example, HEIs may prioritise hiring local faculty to comply with nationalisation policies, but this can conflict with efforts to maintain high international standards and achieve external accreditations. This tension underscores the need for more adaptive and regionally relevant TM strategies that align with both national priorities and global expectations.

3.8.1.2 Impact of External Pressures

External institutional pressures, such as global rankings, international accreditations, and partnerships with foreign universities, significantly influence TM practices in Middle Eastern HEIs. According to Rodney and Atkins (2013), these pressures often drive HEIs to adopt Western TM practices without adequately adapting them to the regional context. For instance, performance appraisal systems developed in the Western context, which emphasise individual achievement and objective metrics, may not be as effective in the Middle Eastern context, where relationships, hierarchy, and cooperation play a larger role in organisational culture. The imposition of these Western practices without appropriate modification to local cultural norms and values may lead to inefficiencies in TM processes, such as the inability to accurately assess the performance of faculty members, who may place a greater emphasis on team collaboration and relational dynamics rather than individualistic goals (Al Kassem & Sbeiti, 2020). This misalignment underscores the need for a contextualised approach to TM that is sensitive to the unique cultural, political, and economic realities of the Middle East.

3.8.1.3 Limited Research in Higher Education in the Middle East

While TM in the corporate sector has received considerable attention in the Middle East, research focusing specifically on TM in HE is still limited. Al-Qahtani and Al-Maliki (2020) conducted one of the few studies examining faculty recruitment and retention in Saudi Arabian universities and found that TM practices in this context are often fragmented and lack coherence with the institutions' broader strategic goals. The authors argue that TM practices in Saudi Arabian universities are poorly coordinated, with recruitment and retention strategies often disconnected from the long-term objectives of the institution. This lack of integration and strategic alignment is a critical gap that needs to be addressed to improve the effectiveness of TM in HEIs in the region. Moreover, faculty members in Middle Eastern HEIs may face unique challenges, such as limited career development opportunities, a lack of mentorship, and restrictive bureaucratic structures, which can further hinder retention and TD (Al-Hashedi, 2021, Al-Mutairi & Aldaihani, 2017).

3.9 Emerging Gaps in Knowledge

While TM has received growing attention in recent years, several important gaps remain in the existing body of research. These gaps hinder the comprehensive understanding and effective application of TM practices in the Middle Eastern HE context. Identifying and addressing these gaps is crucial to developing more contextually relevant TM strategies that align with local needs and global standards. The following sections examine some of the most significant emerging gaps in knowledge related to TM in Middle Eastern HEIs.

3.9.1 Cultural Context and Localisation

While national policies across the Middle East increasingly stress the importance of localisation in TM, the existing empirical studies on TM in the context of HE reveal a significant gap in understanding how cultural values and local traditions impact TM practices. Many global TM frameworks, such as those based on Western models of management, do not fully account for the unique cultural, societal, and religious contexts of the Middle East. For example, research suggests that collectivistic cultures, hierarchical structures, and an emphasis on family and loyalty can influence decision-making processes, leadership styles, and employee expectations in ways that may not align with Western approaches to TM (Al Ariss et al., 2016; Al Kassem & Sbeiti, 2020). As a result, the effectiveness of these global frameworks in Middle Eastern HEIs remains unclear, and further research is needed to explore how these frameworks can be adapted to accommodate local cultural values and practices.

In the context of HE, this cultural divergence may be particularly evident in faculty recruitment, career progression, and retention strategies, where local traditions and societal norms often shape expectations around work-life balance, academic freedom, and family obligations. For example, while Western institutions might prioritise individual academic achievements and professional independence, Middle Eastern HEIs may place more emphasis on collaborative efforts and a strong sense of community.

Research is needed to explore how these differences influence the success of TM practices and to propose a more culturally sensitive framework for TM in the region (Borja & Perido, 2024).

3.9.2 Integration of Stakeholder Perspectives

Another critical gap in the existing TM literature is the limited focus on the perspectives of internal stakeholders, such as faculty, students, and staff, in the development and implementation of TM practices. Much of the current research tends to focus on institutional-level drivers and external forces, such as government policies, international rankings, and accreditation standards, without adequately considering the experiences and expectations of those directly involved in the TM process (Rodney & Atkins, 2013). This oversight may result in the implementation of TM practices that do not fully meet the needs of the people they are meant to serve.

A more holistic approach to TM in HE would involve engaging key stakeholders, faculty members, administrative staff, and students in the decision-making process. Understanding the perspectives of these groups can help institutions identify the internal drivers and enablers of TM, such as leadership support, workplace culture, PD opportunities, and the alignment between institutional goals and individual career aspirations (Jais, Yahaya & Ghani, 2021). Moreover, engaging internal stakeholders in the design and execution of TM practices can foster a sense of ownership and commitment to institutional goals, which could ultimately enhance talent retention, job satisfaction, and overall performance (Al-Hashedi, 2021). Future research should aim to develop frameworks that integrate stakeholder perspectives into TM practices in Middle Eastern HEIs, emphasising the importance of participatory approaches in TD.

3.9.3 Measuring Effectiveness

One of the most significant gaps in the current research on TM in Middle Eastern HE is the lack of standardised measures for assessing the effectiveness of TM practices. While many studies have focused on basic metrics, such as the number of faculty recruited, the diversity of staff, and the representation of different categories within the workforce, these measures do not provide a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes of TM strategies (Forstenlechner et al., 2013). More meaningful metrics are needed to evaluate the success of TM practices, including retention rates, employee engagement, academic performance, stakeholder satisfaction, and institutional outcomes such as research output and innovation (Al Ariss et al., 2016; Hassanein & Özgüt, 2022).

For example, retention rates are a critical measure of the long-term success of TM practices, as high turnover rates may indicate a failure to create a supportive and fulfilling work environment (Kaufman et al., 2021). Similarly, stakeholder satisfaction, particularly among faculty and students, can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of TM practices in fostering a positive academic culture and meeting the diverse needs of the institution's workforce (Rodney & Atkins, 2013). Developing standardised tools for measuring the success of TM in HEIs would not only help assess the impact of current practices but also

guide the improvement of future TM strategies in the region. This area remains under-researched, and further empirical work is needed to develop robust and reliable measures for assessing TM effectiveness in Middle Eastern HE.

3.10 Theoretical Underpinnings of Talent Management in Research in Higher Education

3.10.1 Institutional Theory

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) first developed the framework most often used to analyse TM practices. According to their theory, organisations operate within or are located within an institutional context that consists of norms, rules, and expectations. Such institutional forces define organisational culture and characterise how/change policies and practices are developed and operated. Speaking of HE, Institutional Theory helps identify the impacts of external requirements, namely governmental regulations, accreditation standards, and globally administered rankings, on TM strategies and their alignment with institutional goals (Rodney & Atkins, 2013).

3.10.1.1 Institutional Pressures

Institutional pressures play a critical role in shaping TM practices in HEIs. According to institutional theory, these pressures can be categorised into three types: coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Each of these pressures influences the way universities structure their TM systems, with distinct implications for how institutions operate and manage human resources.

3.10.1.1.1 Coercive Pressures

Coercive pressures are external forces that compel institutions to adopt specific practices in response to legal, regulatory, or market demands. In the context of HE, these pressures often manifest in the form of legal and regulatory requirements, such as workforce localisation policies (e.g., Kuwaitisation, Emiratisation) and diversity standards (Scott, 2014). For instance, many governments in the Middle East have introduced policies aimed at increasing the representation of local nationals in HEIs by mandating that universities hire a certain percentage of local faculty and administrative staff. Such policies not only support national development goals but also ensure that HE systems align with the broader socio-political and economic agenda of the country (Al Ariss et al., 2016; Hassanein & Özgüt, 2022). These coercive pressures can force universities to adopt specific TM practices, such as recruitment of local talent, to comply with government regulations, access funding, or achieve institutional accreditation (Huang et al., 2021).

In many cases, universities are required to meet these diversity and localisation targets in exchange for governmental grants or financial assistance. For example, a university seeking accreditation from international accrediting bodies may need to demonstrate compliance with diversity standards and workforce localisation criteria, resulting in the implementation of targeted TM practices that promote these

objectives (Forstenlechner et al., 2013). However, these pressures can also create tension between the need for global competitiveness and the desire to meet localised workforce needs.

3.10.1.1.2 Normative Pressures

Normative pressures arise from the professional norms, values, and expectations that guide the behaviour of institutions and individuals within a given sector (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In the HE context, these pressures are often shaped by academic and professional standards, as well as societal values related to equity, inclusivity, and faculty development (Sun & Li, 2021). For instance, normative pressures can push universities to adopt TM practices that reflect the growing emphasis on inclusivity and equal opportunity in academic environments. Universities may feel the pressure to implement faculty development programs that promote gender equality, cultural diversity (Aftimos & Al Saeed, 2023), and inclusive teaching practices in line with global best practices (Rodney & Atkins, 2013).

In addition, universities are increasingly expected to create and sustain supportive academic and professional environments that encourage faculty engagement, job satisfaction, and career progression. The push for faculty development initiatives that align with societal and professional expectations has become a key aspect of normative pressures in HE (Jiang & Liu, 2022). These pressures not only shape the development of TM strategies but also influence the type of academic talent that institutions seek to attract and retain.

3.10.1.1.3 Mimetic Pressures

Mimetic pressures arise when institutions or organisations imitate the practices of other successful or highly regarded institutions in response to uncertainty or the desire to gain legitimacy and enhance their reputation (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). In the HE sector, universities often look to world-class institutions for guidance on how to structure their TM practices, particularly when faced with competitive pressures in global rankings, international collaborations, and accreditation processes (Rodney & Atkins, 2013). These mimetic pressures are evident in the growing trend of universities adopting recruitment strategies and PD programs that mirror those of top-ranked institutions, in order to enhance their reputation and academic standing.

Competitive recruitment strategies that emphasise global talent acquisition, sophisticated hiring processes, and PD opportunities are increasingly being adopted by universities in the Middle East (Al-Hashedi, 2021; Kaufman et al., 2021). In addition, the desire to enhance their international reputation and attract high-quality faculty has led many universities to implement PD programs similar to those offered by leading universities worldwide, such as Harvard, Oxford, or the University of Cambridge (Huang et al., 2021). These institutions often offer prestigious training programs, research funding opportunities, and career advancement pathways to enhance the capabilities of their faculty and staff.

While these mimetic pressures can contribute to the globalisation of TM practices in HE, they can also lead to the adoption of practices that may not be fully compatible with local cultural, economic, or institutional contexts (Huang et al., 2021). This disconnect can create challenges for universities attempting to balance global aspirations with local realities, as the adoption of foreign practices may not always be suitable for the specific needs of the institution or the surrounding community.

3.10.1.2 Insights Offered by Institutional Theory

Understandings gained from Institutional Theory fall under three categories. Firstly, institutional isomorphism is a theory from institutional theory that explains how organisations tend to mimic practices that are standard in an institutional setting. In the HE sector; it can be observed that the diffusion of TM practices in terms of talent attraction and retention is in line with international trends. For instance, diversity and inclusion have become mainstream in virtually all universities globally because such practices serve both accreditation and legitimacy needs (Gusman & Buchler, 2014). Second, the role of context: according to Allen (2019) one of the biggest advantages of Institutional Theory is that it is very contextual. It informs it that institutional pressures are not equal; cultural, economic, and regulatory contexts in societies influence the reactions of the organisations. For example, TM practises discussed in European universities, for which equality reigns, may emphasise equality and collective decision-making. Meanwhile, institutions in the Middle East can be focused on nationalisation and adherence to the policies initiated by states (Greenwood et al., 2011). Thirdly, institutional change and resistance to organisational change are other areas that belong to the field of study promulgated by institutional theory, which is the difficulty of institutionalisation. TM development could be opposed by HEIs, which are commonly marked by highly developed bureaucratic structures. For example, the implementation of performance-related pay or more liberal working conditions may be challenged as several faculty members may be ethnocentric towards usual standards. According to Greenwood et al. (2011), overcoming such resistance calls for integrating TM practises, hence constituting the existing institutional logic.

3.10.1.3 Gaps in Institutional Theory for this study

Institutional Theory provides a robust framework for understanding organisational behaviour and compliance with external norms; however, it has notable limitations in the context of TM practices in HE. One of the gaps is that the theory focuses on external pressures. Institutional theory predominantly focuses on the external institutional environment, such as regulatory frameworks, accreditation demands, and societal expectations, often neglecting internal organisational dynamics (Scott, 2014). Internal factors such as organisational culture, leadership styles, and employee perceptions are critical to the successful implementation of TM strategies (Boon et al., 2018). Leadership buy-in and supportive organisational culture are essential for fostering a sustainable talent ecosystem. Yet, Institutional Theory offers limited guidance on how these internal elements interact with external pressures to shape TM outcomes. Secondly, the theory's emphasis on organisational conformity to external pressures may inadvertently

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underplay the role of innovation in TM practices. Entrepreneurial universities, which experiment with novel approaches to employee retention and recruitment, challenge the traditional mould described by Institutional Theory (Etzkowitz, 2003). Institutions that adopt disruptive recruitment strategies, such as data-driven hiring processes or flexible employment models, deviate from normative expectations and remain underexplored in the theory. This lack of recognition for innovative practices limits the applicability of Institutional Theory in dynamic HE contexts. Thirdly, Institutional Theory provides a framework for understanding the "why" behind the adoption of TM practices but lacks a robust mechanism for evaluating their effectiveness. Key performance indicators (KPIs), such as staff retention rates, satisfaction levels, and overall institutional performance, are not adequately addressed within the theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Consequently, the theory fails to answer critical questions, such as whether TM practices are achieving their intended objectives or how they contribute to long-term organisational success. Addressing this gap would require integrating complementary frameworks that prioritise performance metrics and goal alignment.

3.10.2 Stakeholder Theory

Freeman's (1984) Stakeholder Theory plays a crucial role in looking at the factors which are in relation to the context of managing talent in HE. This underlines the point about catering for a wide range of stakeholders as universities are not merely organisations that operate in a vacuum, but rather they are organisations that are social institutions and, thus, have social relationships with various categories of stakeholders who have diverse wants, needs and, indeed, coercive power. They include faculty, students, administrative personnel, government, industry and corporations, accreditation organisations and local communities. Knowledge of these patterns is essential to plan and facilitate the strategies in TM for HE organisations.

3.10.2.1 Understanding Gathered from Stakeholder Theory

1. Stakeholder Inclusivity

Stakeholder Theory asserts that decision-making processes should involve all relevant stakeholders to be effective and sustainable (Freeman, 1984). When applied to TM within HEIs, this theory highlights the importance of considering the expectations and needs of diverse stakeholders, including faculty, students, administration, and external factors such as government bodies and industry partners (Mitchell et al., 1997). The primary challenge for HEIs is balancing the often-conflicting interests of these stakeholders while aligning TM practices with institutional goals.

The recruitment policies aimed at attracting highly qualified faculty may conflict with students' expectations for lower tuition fees and better services, such as improved extracurricular activities or more personalised learning experiences (Harrison & Freeman, 1999). Stakeholder Theory suggests that institutions should strive for a balance between these competing demands, ensuring that all stakeholders

feel valued and included in the decision-making process. This can involve negotiation, bargaining, and coordination to create TM practices that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of all stakeholders, thereby enhancing institutional sustainability (Sun & Li, 2021).

Incorporating stakeholder inclusivity into TM strategies can improve institutional effectiveness and contribute to a more positive organisational culture. For example, engaging faculty in the development of PD programs or allowing students to participate in curriculum design fosters a sense of ownership and increases buy-in from key stakeholders. This inclusive approach ensures that TM practices are fair, transparent, and aligned with the institution's long-term goals, which ultimately enhances both recruitment and retention (Rowley, 1997).

2. Power Dynamics

Stakeholder Theory also emphasises the role of power dynamics in shaping the direction of TM strategies. Different stakeholders, whether internal (e.g., faculty, administration) or external (e.g., government agencies, industry partners), hold varying degrees of influence over institutional decisions (Mitchell et al., 1997). Power dynamics can significantly impact how TM practices are formulated, particularly in the context of recruitment, faculty development, and curriculum design.

Government regulations and laws may dictate specific recruitment policies or faculty hiring practices, such as the requirement for universities to hire local talent in line with national workforce policies, such as Kuwaitisation or Emiratisation (Huang et al., 2021). Similarly, industry partners may exert influence on university curricula by promoting the development of specific skills that align with labour market needs, thus affecting the types of competencies that universities prioritise in their TM strategies (Al-Ariss et al., 2016). This external power dynamic can shape the TM framework by ensuring that universities focus on skills and competencies that align with national or industry priorities, even if these priorities conflict with internal goals such as academic freedom or research focus (Scott, 2014).

Mitchell et al. (1997) proposed a typology of stakeholders based on their power, legitimacy, and urgency, which provides a useful tool for understanding how different stakeholders influence TM decisions. For example, government agencies with regulatory power over recruitment practices may have significant influence on diversity and localisation efforts, while alumni, although lacking direct regulatory power, can shape the academic culture and reputation of the institution (Sun & Li, 2021). Understanding these power dynamics helps universities navigate the complexities of TM and ensures that decisions are made with consideration of the varied interests of stakeholders.

3. Collaborative Decision-Making

Stakeholder Theory advocates for a collaborative approach to decision-making, which is essential for developing effective and sustainable TM strategies (Freeman, 1984). In the context of HE, this theory supports the idea that decisions regarding recruitment, retention, and development should involve a participatory process where all relevant stakeholders have a voice. This approach contrasts with top-down

decision-making, which may not fully consider the needs and preferences of all stakeholders and could lead to resistance or disengagement (Harrison & Freeman, 1999).

A participatory approach can enhance the effectiveness of TM practices by fostering a sense of ownership and accountability among stakeholders. For instance, engaging faculty members in the design and implementation of PD programs helps ensure that these programs meet their needs and contribute to career advancement. Similarly, involving students in feedback processes related to hiring practices or curriculum development can improve the alignment of TM practices with student expectations and enhance overall satisfaction (Rowley, 1997).

This collaborative decision-making process leads to higher levels of stakeholder buy-in, which in turn can improve retention rates, academic performance, and institutional commitment (Sun & Li, 2021). Moreover, it ensures that TM strategies are not only more inclusive but also more sustainable, as they reflect the diverse perspectives and expectations of various stakeholders. As a result, universities are better positioned to create a thriving academic community that aligns with both internal objectives and external demands (Jiang & Liu, 2022).

3.10.2.2 Gaps in Stakeholder Theory in this research

Stakeholder Theory offers valuable insights into managing multiple interests in HE, particularly in relation to TM. However, several limitations hinder its practical application in this context. One significant gap in Stakeholder Theory is its failure to provide clear guidance on how to prioritise and reconcile competing demands among stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2010). Although the theory emphasises the importance of communication and involvement, it does not offer a practical roadmap for addressing conflicts. For instance, universities often face challenges in balancing the academic freedom of faculty with the workforce needs of industries and employers (Greenwood et al., 2021). Without a structured framework to navigate these competing interests, institutions may adopt conflicting policies or practices, thereby undermining the effective implementation of TM strategies. This ambiguity can hinder decision-making and strategic alignment, particularly in HEIs operating in culturally and economically diverse contexts. Secondly, the theory also falls short in providing actionable mechanisms for stakeholder engagement, particularly in complex organisations such as universities. Stakeholder Theory advocates for active and ongoing engagement but implementing this in HEIs characterised by diverse and numerous stakeholders, including faculty, students, policymakers, and external partners, poses significant challenges (Mitchell et al., 1997). Building effective relationships, integrating stakeholders into decision-making processes, and resolving conflicts require considerable resources and time, which are often limited in HEIs (Bryson et al., 2019). Furthermore, the theory does not account for variations in stakeholder influence or the evolving nature of their expectations, further complicating the operationalisation of stakeholder engagement (Kujala et al., 2022).

3.11 Integrating Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory

Organisations operate in complex environments shaped by a multitude of external pressures, ranging from societal expectations to the demands of diverse stakeholders. To navigate these challenges, scholars have increasingly turned to the integration of Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory, two frameworks that, when combined, offer a comprehensive lens for understanding organisational behaviour. The integration of these two theories offers a powerful framework for understanding how organisations navigate complex environments. For instance, Bansal and Roth (2000) examined why firms adopt environmentally responsible practices and found that institutional pressures (coercive, normative, and mimetic) align with stakeholder demands (from governments, NGOs, and customers) to drive corporate behaviour. Similarly, Crilly, Zollo, and Hansen (2012) explored how organisations decouple their formal structures from actual practices in response to conflicting stakeholder and institutional pressures. Stakeholder Theory helped identify the sources of pressure, while Institutional Theory explained how organisations manage these pressures through symbolic compliance or substantive action. This dual lens provides a nuanced understanding of organisational responses to external pressures.

Another notable example is the work of Hörisch, Freeman, and Schaltegger (2014), who explicitly integrated Stakeholder Theory and Institutional Theory to analyse sustainability management. Stakeholder Theory identifies key actors and their interests, while Institutional Theory explains how societal norms and regulations shape organisational responses. This integration provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how organisations balance stakeholder demands with institutional expectations in the context of sustainability. Similarly, Stahl and Tung (2015) examined how multinational enterprises (MNEs) balance global and local Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices. Institutional Theory explained the global pressures for CSR integration, while Stakeholder Theory highlighted local stakeholder demands. The study demonstrated how MNEs navigate conflicting pressures by aligning their strategies with both institutional norms and stakeholder expectations.

Greenwood et al. (2011) further expanded on this integration by exploring how organisations respond to institutional complexity, where multiple institutional logics and stakeholder demands conflict. Stakeholder Theory is implicitly integrated by emphasising how stakeholders represent different institutional logics, and organisations must balance these competing demands to survive. This study highlighted the dynamic interplay between institutional and stakeholder pressures, offering valuable insights into how organisations manage complexity.

Contribution of the Proposed Integrative Framework

The proposed framework seeks to offer a comprehensive approach to TM in HEIs by integrating both institutional and stakeholder theories to offer a more holistic understanding of TM in HEIs. This approach considers both macro-level institutional forces (coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures) and the micro-level dynamics of stakeholder interests and power (Mitchell et al., 1997; Scott, 2014). The integration

of these two perspectives is crucial because one theory alone does not provide a comprehensive explanation of the complexities involved in TM practices in HEIs.

The key innovation of this proposed framework lies in its ability to address the dual influence of institutional pressures and stakeholder interests on TM decisions. By considering both external institutional forces and internal stakeholder dynamics, this framework allows for a deeper understanding of how HEIs can balance regulatory requirements with stakeholder expectations to design TM practices that are both legally compliant and institutionally effective.

Additionally, the proposed framework introduces a focus on the interactions between different stakeholder groups, recognising that the interests of administrators, faculty, students, and external bodies often conflict. Unlike previous studies that have focused predominantly on either institutional pressures or stakeholder interests in isolation, this framework emphasises how these forces work together to shape TM strategies. For example, while government policies may push for local recruitment (coercive pressures), industry partners may demand graduates with specific skills (stakeholder interests), and academic staff may seek more research opportunities (normative pressures). The framework provides a structure for understanding how HEIs navigate these competing demands and make strategic decisions that align with both institutional objectives and stakeholder needs.

Novelty and Differentiation from Existing Literature

While the combination of Institutional and Stakeholder Theories has been explored in other fields, such as corporate governance and organisational studies (Agle et al., 2008; Hillman et al., 2001), its application in the context of TM in HEIs remains underdeveloped. Previous research has either focused on institutional theory alone to explain the role of external pressures in shaping organisational behaviour (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) or on stakeholder theory to understand internal decision-making processes (Rowley, 1997). However, few studies have integrated these two theories to explore how both external forces and internal stakeholder interests coalesce to influence TM practices in HEIs.

This research contributes to the literature by bridging this gap, offering a novel perspective that integrates these two well-established theories to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding TM in the HE context. The framework does not simply develop existing theories but uses their combined strengths to address the complex and dynamic nature of TM practices in HEIs, which is crucial for understanding how universities can manage talent effectively in a rapidly changing global landscape.

3.12 Rationale for Integration

In exploring TM practices at University XYZ within the context of HEIs, I adopted a multi-theoretical approach, incorporating institutional and stakeholder theories. This approach is inspired by frameworks resembling those used by Collings et al. (2019) in global talent management research, which leverage diverse perspectives to address the complexity of managing talent in dynamic, multi-level environments.

Collings et al. (2019) highlight the importance of theories such as the RBV, dynamic capabilities, and contingency theory, along with a multilevel perspective and the concept of human capital emergence. Together, these frameworks provide a robust lens to examine how TM aligns with organisational strategy and performance.

Institutional theory is highly relevant to University XYZ as it examines how external forces such as regulatory requirements, accreditation standards, societal expectations, and global educational benchmarks shape organisational practices. In the context of HEIs, TM strategies cannot be divorced from these external pressures, as they significantly influence the institution's policies and priorities. Similarly, stakeholder theory underlines the importance of engaging diverse internal and external stakeholders—such as faculty, students, government bodies, and industry partners in shaping TM practices. In the HEI context, this means balancing the expectations of multiple constituencies to ensure sustainable performance and alignment with strategic goals.

By employing a multi-theoretical approach, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of TM practices at University XYZ. This approach captures the complexity of aligning institutional and stakeholder demands with strategic goals while addressing the dynamic and multilevel nature of the HEI context. Drawing from Collings et al. (2019), this methodology ensures a nuanced analysis of the interplay between external pressures, internal dynamics, and organisational outcomes.

3.13 Conclusion

The literature review in this study provides a comprehensive examination of the factors influencing TM practices in HEIs. While it highlights significant theoretical and empirical insights, several gaps persist that form the focus of this study and its interview questions. These gaps are summarised as follows:

First, there is a notable absence of research that examines how global TM frameworks interact with the cultural context and localised societal norms in the Middle East, particularly in relation to HE. This gap is critical, as cultural values and religious practices significantly influence TM practices, yet these factors have been underexplored in the existing literature (Al-Ariss et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2021).

Second, existing studies tend to focus predominantly on institutional-level drivers and external forces, while the role of internal stakeholders, such as administrators, faculty, and students remains underexplored. This gap highlights the need for a more inclusive framework that integrates stakeholder perspectives, including the power dynamics and collaborative decision-making processes that shape TM practices in HEIs (Mitchell et al., 1997; Rowley, 1997). A deeper understanding of how different stakeholder groups contribute to the development and implementation of TM strategies is essential for fostering more sustainable and effective practices in HE.

Third, while studies on TM effectiveness abound, there is a lack of standardised measures to assess the success of these practices in HEIs, particularly in the Middle Eastern context. Existing studies often rely on

basic metrics, such as faculty recruitment numbers and diversity representation, but fail to explore more complex outcomes such as retention rates, academic performance, and stakeholder satisfaction (Scott, 2014; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Standardised measures would allow for a more robust evaluation of TM practices and provide valuable insights into their impact on HEI performance.

Finally, the integration of Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory offers a novel perspective in addressing these gaps. Previous studies have applied these theories in isolation, but this research proposes an integrative theoretical framework that considers both external institutional pressures and internal stakeholder dynamics. This framework allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how TM practices in HEIs are shaped by both coercive, normative, and mimetic pressures from external institutions, as well as by the diverse interests and power relations of internal stakeholders (Mitchell et al., 1997; Freeman, 1984). By bridging these two theories, this study offers a unique contribution to the literature on TM in HEIs, particularly in the context of the Middle East.

3.14 Chapter Summary

This literature review aims to explore existing literature on TM in Kuwait. The literature review focuses on the critical role of institutional vision and policies in shaping effective TM practices within HEIs. Chapter Three provides a comprehensive overview of the literature on how well-defined institutional vision, supported by forward-looking policies, enables HEIs to adapt to the evolving educational landscapes and implement TM practices that address emerging needs. Institutions that prioritise flexibility, PD, and supportive work environments are better equipped to engage and retain employees, thus enhancing overall institutional performance. Policies that align with national standards and societal values around DEI further strengthen HEIs' ability to attract and manage diverse talent, ultimately contributing to a more dynamic academic community.

Chapter Three also explores the impact of organisational characteristics, external factors, and internal constraints on TM practices. HEIs leverage their unique organisational traits, such as an emphasis on innovation and competitive compensation, to attract top talent and gain a competitive edge. However, challenges such as limited resources, cultural barriers, and market constraints can impede effective TM implementation. In the next chapter, the theoretical framework of the study is examined.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework

4.0 Introduction

This study investigates the TM practices employed at an HEI in Kuwait. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how academic talent is defined, recruited, and managed within this unique context. By examining the strategies and approaches used to attract, engage, and retain faculty members, the study assesses the effectiveness of these TM practices in enhancing institutional operations and overall effectiveness. Chapter Four focuses on the theoretical framework of this study.

The theoretical framework of this study is constructed upon two theories: Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory. These theories provide a robust foundation for understanding the complex dynamics of TM practices within HEIs in Kuwait. By integrating these theories, this study aims to explore how institutional norms and stakeholder influences shape the implementation and evaluation of TM practices, as well as the key factors that drive these processes. Also, examining these theories helps to understand better the external and internal influences on TM practices and the role of various stakeholders in shaping these processes.

4.1 Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory provides a lens through which the deeply embedded norms, values, and rules that govern organisational behaviour and practices can be examined. This theory posits that institutions are shaped by both formal and informal rules, which dictate the behaviour of organisations and individuals within them (Scott, 2008). When applied to HEIs, institutional theory elucidates how TM practices are influenced by the broader institutional environment, encompassing regulatory frameworks, cultural norms, and organisational traditions.

4.1.1 Historical Context and Evolution

Institutional theory originated in sociology and organisational studies, with significant contributions from Meyer and Rowan (1977), DiMaggio and Powell (1983), and Scott (1995). Meyer and Rowan (1977) introduced the concept of institutionalised organisations, arguing that organisations conform to societal expectations to gain legitimacy and stability. From their perspective, organisations adopt formal structures and practices not merely to enhance efficiency but to align themselves with the expectations and norms of their institutional environment.

Expanding upon the foundational work set forth by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) developed the concept of institutional isomorphism within the academic discourse. This concept describes the phenomenon whereby organisations, over time, tend to exhibit similarities due to the influence of external pressures (as they become more as each other over time due to external pressures). Their research identified three mechanisms of isomorphism:

Coercive Isomorphism

This occurs when organisations conform to external pressures such as regulations and legal requirements. Organisations comply with these pressures to avoid sanctions and gain legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Mimetic isomorphism

Organisations facing uncertainty may mimic the practices of successful and prestigious institutions. This is a strategy to gain legitimacy and improve their standing by adopting proven practices from leading organisations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Normative Isomorphism

This mechanism arises from professional norms and the influence of professional networks. Organisations adopt practices that are deemed appropriate or professional by industry standards and associations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Scott (1995) further expanded on these concepts, emphasising the importance of understanding both formal and informal institutional pressures. Scott (1995) highlighted that institutions are not static but evolve in response to changes within their environment. This evolution includes the adaptation of new practices and the negotiation of conflicting pressures.

4.1.2 Institutional isomorphism in HEIs

In the context of Kuwaiti HEIs, institutional isomorphism manifests through the adoption of standardised TM practices influenced by global trends, government regulations, and accreditation requirements. The concept of isomorphism provides a framework for understanding how HEIs align their TM practices with these external pressures:

Coercive Isomorphism

Kuwaiti HEIs are subject to regulations imposed by the Kuwaiti government and international accrediting bodies. Compliance with these regulations often necessitates the implementation of specific TM practices. For example, adherence to accreditation standards may require HEIs to establish rigorous performance appraisal systems and faculty development programmes (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). These practices ensure that institutions meet the criteria set forth by accrediting agencies, thereby maintaining their accreditation status and institutional legitimacy.

Mimetic Isomorphism

To enhance their reputation and attract top talent, Kuwaiti HEIs may adopt TM practices from prestigious international institutions. This mimicry is evident in the incorporation of best practices from globally recognised universities. For instance, HEIs might emulate the recruitment and retention strategies of leading institutions to elevate their status and appeal (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Normative Isomorphism

Professional networks and academic associations play a significant role in shaping TM practices within HEIs. These networks advocate for specific standards and practices that become normative within the academic community. Kuwaiti HEIs, by participating in these networks and adhering to their standards, align their TM practices with those promoted by influential academic bodies (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

The interplay of these mechanisms illustrates how Kuwaiti HEIs navigate their institutional environment, balancing compliance with regulatory requirements, imitation of successful practices, and alignment with professional norms.

4.1.3 Institutional Logics and TM Practices

Institutional logics refer to the belief systems and practices that guide behaviour within institutions. These logics are shaped by an institution's mission, vision, and strategic goals. In HEIs, institutional logics influence the development and implementation of TM practices:

Research-Oriented Institutions

For HEIs with a strong emphasis on research, TM practices are often designed to attract and retain high-calibre research talent. These institutions prioritise recruitment strategies that target leading researchers, provide substantial research funding, and create an environment conducive to advanced research activities. The focus on research excellence drives TM practices that support the institution's strategic goal of enhancing research output and impact (Scott, 2008).

Teaching-Oriented Institutions

Conversely, HEIs with a teaching-centric mission may prioritise TM practices that focus on faculty development and teaching excellence. These institutions emphasise the recruitment of educators with strong teaching credentials and offer PD opportunities to enhance teaching skills. TM practices in these institutions are aligned with the goal of delivering high-quality education and improving student learning outcomes (Scott, 2008).

Scott (2008) highlights that institutional logic is not static but evolves in response to internal and external pressures. In Kuwaiti HEIs, the interaction between local cultural norms and global HE trends creates a unique institutional logic that shapes TM practices. For example, HEIs may need to balance traditional cultural values with modern educational practices to effectively manage talent while remaining true to their institutional values and mission.

4.1.4 Institutional Complexity and Contradictions

Institutional theory also addresses the complexity and contradictions that arise within institutions due to the coexistence of multiple institutional logics. This complexity is particularly relevant in HEIs, where different logics, such as academic, administrative, and governmental, often intersect and sometimes conflict:

Academic vs. Administrative Logics

The emphasis on research productivity in some HEIs may conflict with teaching responsibilities, creating tensions in TM practices. For example, faculty members who are expected to engage in extensive research activities may need help to balance these demands with their teaching responsibilities. This conflict can lead to challenges in developing TM practices that satisfy both academic and administrative expectations (Greenwood et al., 2011).

Local Cultural Norms vs. Global Trends

In Kuwaiti HEIs, the influence of local cultural norms can sometimes clash with global HE trends. For instance, while there may be a strong emphasis on traditional values and practices, there is also pressure to adopt international best practices to enhance institutional reputation and competitiveness. Navigating these contradictions requires a nuanced understanding of both local and global influences on TM practices (Greenwood et al., 2011).

Effective TM practices must address these contradictions by fostering a culture of collaboration and alignment between different institutional logics. This involves creating strategies that accommodate various demands and interests while maintaining coherence with the institution's mission and values.

4.1.5 The Role of Institutional Context in Shaping TM Practices

The institutional context significantly influences how TM practices are developed and implemented within HEIs. The broader institutional environment, including regulatory frameworks, cultural norms, and organisational traditions, shapes the nature of TM practices and their alignment with institutional goals:

Regulatory Frameworks

The regulatory environment, including government policies and accreditation requirements, establishes the parameters within which HEIs operate. These frameworks often dictate certain aspects of TM practices, such as performance evaluation criteria and faculty development requirements. HEIs must ensure that their TM practices comply with these regulations to maintain their legitimacy and operational stability (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Cultural Norms

Cultural norms and societal expectations play a critical role in shaping TM practices. In Kuwaiti HEIs, cultural values influence aspects of TM, such as gender roles, hierarchical structures, and decision-making processes. Understanding and integrating these cultural norms into TM practices is essential for creating a supportive and effective work environment (Scott, 2008).

Organisational Traditions

An institution's traditions and historical practices also impact its TM practices. Established norms and practices within an HEI can either support or hinder the adoption of new TM strategies. For example, an institution with a long history of traditional hiring practices may face challenges in implementing modern recruitment techniques (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

4.1.6 Future Directions in Institutional Theory

Institutional theory continues to evolve, with several emerging directions that offer new perspectives on the role of institutions in shaping organisational practices:

Integration with Innovation

There is growing interest in exploring how institutions influence and adapt to innovation. HEIs are increasingly recognising the need to innovate in response to changing educational demands and technological advancements. Understanding how institutional logic supports or hinders innovation can provide valuable insights into the development of effective TM practices (Scott, 2008).

Cross-National Comparisons

Comparative studies across different national contexts offer opportunities to understand how institutional environments vary and influence TM practices. By examining HEIs in diverse cultural and regulatory contexts, researchers can identify best practices and challenges that are unique to specific institutional settings (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Dynamic Institutional Environments

The concept of dynamic institutional environments acknowledges that institutions are continually evolving in response to changing conditions. This perspective highlights the need for HEIs to remain adaptable and responsive to shifts in their institutional environment, including changes in regulatory frameworks, cultural norms, and global trends (Greenwood et al., 2011).

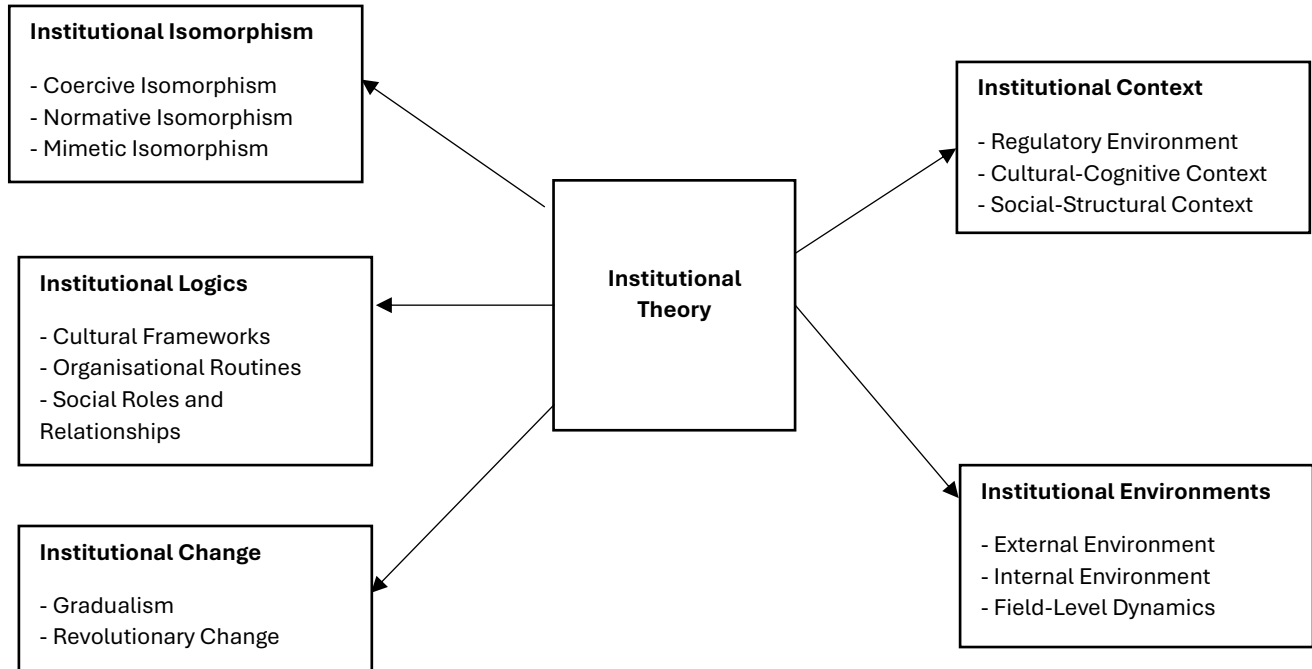


Figure 2: Institutional Theory Source: Researcher (2024)

4.2 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory provides a subtle framework for examining the roles and influences of various stakeholders in organisational decision-making and practices (Freeman, 1984). This theory is particularly pertinent to studying TM in HEIs, where a multitude of stakeholders, including administrators, faculty, students, regulatory bodies, and the community, hold vested interests in the institution's TM practices.

4.2.1 Historical Context and Evolution

Stakeholder theory emerged as a response to the limitations of traditional management theories that focused primarily on shareholders. Freeman (1984) argued that organisations operate within a network of relationships, and their success depends on effectively managing these relationships. This theory has since evolved to encompass various perspectives, including normative, instrumental, and descriptive approaches (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

Freeman's foundational work laid the groundwork for what would become a more nuanced theory encompassing various perspectives. Donaldson and Preston (1995) categorised these perspectives into normative, instrumental, and descriptive approaches:

Normative Approach

This perspective emphasises the ethical obligations organisations have towards their stakeholders. It posits that organisations have a moral duty to consider the interests of all stakeholders, not just shareholders. This approach aligns with the broader view of CSR and suggests that ethical considerations should guide organisational decision-making (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

Instrumental Approach

This approach focuses on the strategic benefits of managing stakeholder relationships effectively. It argues that positive relationships with stakeholders can enhance organisational performance and long-term success. By addressing stakeholder needs and expectations, organisations can improve their operational efficiency, reputation, and competitive advantage (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

Descriptive Approach

The descriptive approach seeks to understand how organisations engage with their stakeholders in practice. It involves examining the ways in which organisations interact with and respond to stakeholder concerns and interests. This perspective is valuable for understanding the practical implications of stakeholder management and identifying best practices (Jones, 1995).

Over time, stakeholder theory has evolved to incorporate additional dimensions, such as the role of power and influence in stakeholder relationships (Mitchell et al., 1997). This evolution reflects the growing recognition of the complex and dynamic nature of stakeholder interactions.

4.2.2 Stakeholder Identification and Salience

Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) introduced the concept of stakeholder salience, which refers to the importance of different stakeholders based on their power, legitimacy, and urgency. This concept is critical for understanding how HEIs prioritise and address stakeholder needs:

Power

The ability of a stakeholder to influence organisational decisions and outcomes. For instance, government agencies and regulatory bodies wield significant power due to their roles in funding and accreditation. Their influence can shape TM practices by setting standards and requirements that HEIs must comply with (Mitchell et al., 1997).

Legitimacy

The perceived validity or appropriateness of a stakeholder's claim to be heard. Students, as primary stakeholders, hold high legitimacy due to their direct impact on the institution's mission and revenue. Their needs and expectations are integral to shaping TM practices that support their academic and PD (Mitchell et al., 1997).

Urgency

The degree to which a stakeholder's needs or claims require immediate attention. Faculty members, for example, may have urgent needs related to PD and career progression. Addressing these needs promptly is crucial for maintaining faculty satisfaction and engagement (Mitchell et al., 1997).

In HEIs, stakeholders can be categorised based on their level of influence and the urgency of their needs. Administrators and faculty are critical stakeholders whose engagement and satisfaction directly affect the quality of education and research. Government agencies and regulatory bodies hold significant power due to their role in funding and accreditation. Alumni and the community, while having less direct influence, contribute to the institution's reputation and resource base through donations and support. Effective stakeholder management requires a nuanced understanding of these categories and the ability to balance competing interests. By identifying the salience of different stakeholders, HEIs can develop targeted strategies to address their needs and expectations.

4.2.3 Stakeholder Engagement in HEIs

Effective stakeholder engagement involves identifying the needs and expectations of different stakeholders and developing strategies to address them. According to Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, and de Colle (2010), engagement should be proactive and continuous, involving regular communication, feedback mechanisms, and collaborative decision-making processes.

In the context of TM, stakeholder engagement is crucial for designing practices that align with the interests and needs of various groups:

Faculty Engagement

Involving faculty in the development of TM practices can ensure that these practices are relevant and supportive of their professional growth. For example, faculty members can provide insights into the types of PD opportunities they find most valuable, helping to shape TM strategies that enhance their skills and career prospects (Freeman et al., 2010).

Student Engagement

Engaging students in the evaluation of TM initiatives can provide valuable feedback on their effectiveness and areas for improvement. By incorporating student perspectives, HEIs can design TM practices that

better support students' academic and career goals, enhancing their overall experience (Freeman et al., 2010).

Regulatory Bodies

Regular communication with regulatory bodies is essential for ensuring compliance with accreditation standards and other requirements. Engaging with these stakeholders helps HEIs stay informed about regulatory changes and adapt their TM practices accordingly (Freeman et al., 2010).

Community and Alumni

Building solid relationships with the community and alumni can support the institution's reputation and resource base. Engagement with these stakeholders can involve initiatives such as alumni networks, community outreach programs, and fundraising efforts. These relationships can contribute to the institution's long-term success and sustainability (Freeman et al., 2010).

By fostering a culture of inclusivity and collaboration, HEIs can enhance their TM practices and build stronger relationships with their stakeholders. Effective engagement strategies help HEIs align their practices with stakeholder interests, improve organisational performance, and achieve their strategic goals.

4.2.4 The Role of Power Dynamics in Stakeholder Relationships

Understanding power dynamics is crucial for managing stakeholder relationships effectively. Power dynamics influence how stakeholders interact with the organisation and shape their ability to influence decision-making processes. In HEIs, power dynamics can be complex, involving multiple stakeholders with varying degrees of influence.

Power dynamics can impact stakeholder engagement in several ways:

Balancing Interests

HEIs must navigate competing interests among stakeholders, such as balancing the needs of students and faculty with regulatory requirements and community expectations. Effective stakeholder management involves addressing these competing interests and finding solutions that satisfy multiple parties (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

Influence and Negotiation

Stakeholders with significant power can influence organisational decisions through negotiation and advocacy. For example, government agencies may negotiate funding terms and accreditation standards, while faculty unions may advocate for changes in TM practices related to workload and compensation (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

Strategic Alliances

Building strategic alliances with key stakeholders can enhance an HEI's ability to achieve its goals. For instance, collaborating with industry partners can provide additional resources and support for TM initiatives, while engaging with alumni can foster long-term relationships that benefit the institution (Freeman, 1984).

4.2.5 The Impact of External Factors on Stakeholder Relationships

External factors, such as economic conditions, technological advancements, and political changes, can influence stakeholder relationships and impact TM practices. HEIs must adapt to these external factors to maintain effective stakeholder engagement and align their practices with changing circumstances.

Economic Conditions

Economic fluctuations can affect funding levels, student enrolment, and faculty compensation. HEIs must navigate these changes by adjusting their TM practices to address financial constraints and ensure continued support for stakeholders (Chethana & Noronha, 2023).

Technological Advancements

Technological innovations can influence stakeholder expectations and practices. For example, the adoption of online learning platforms and digital tools may impact faculty teaching methods and student learning experiences. HEIs must stay abreast of technological developments and integrate them into their TM practices (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014).

Political Changes

Changes in political leadership and policies can affect funding, regulations, and institutional priorities. HEIs must be responsive to these changes and adapt their TM practices to align with new policies and expectations (Stone, 2008).

4.2.6 Future Directions in Stakeholder Theory

As stakeholder theory continues to evolve, several future directions are emerging:

Integration with Sustainability

There is growing interest in integrating stakeholder management with sustainability practices. HEIs are increasingly recognising the importance of environmental and social sustainability and are developing TM practices that align with these goals (Freeman et al., 2010).

Global Perspectives

The globalisation of HE presents new challenges and opportunities for stakeholder management. HEIs must consider the interests of international stakeholders and adapt their TM practices to address global trends and challenges (Knight, 2019).

Technology and Innovation

Advances in technology are transforming stakeholder engagement and management. HEIs are exploring new ways to leverage technology for communication, collaboration, and data analysis, enhancing their ability to engage with stakeholders effectively (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014).

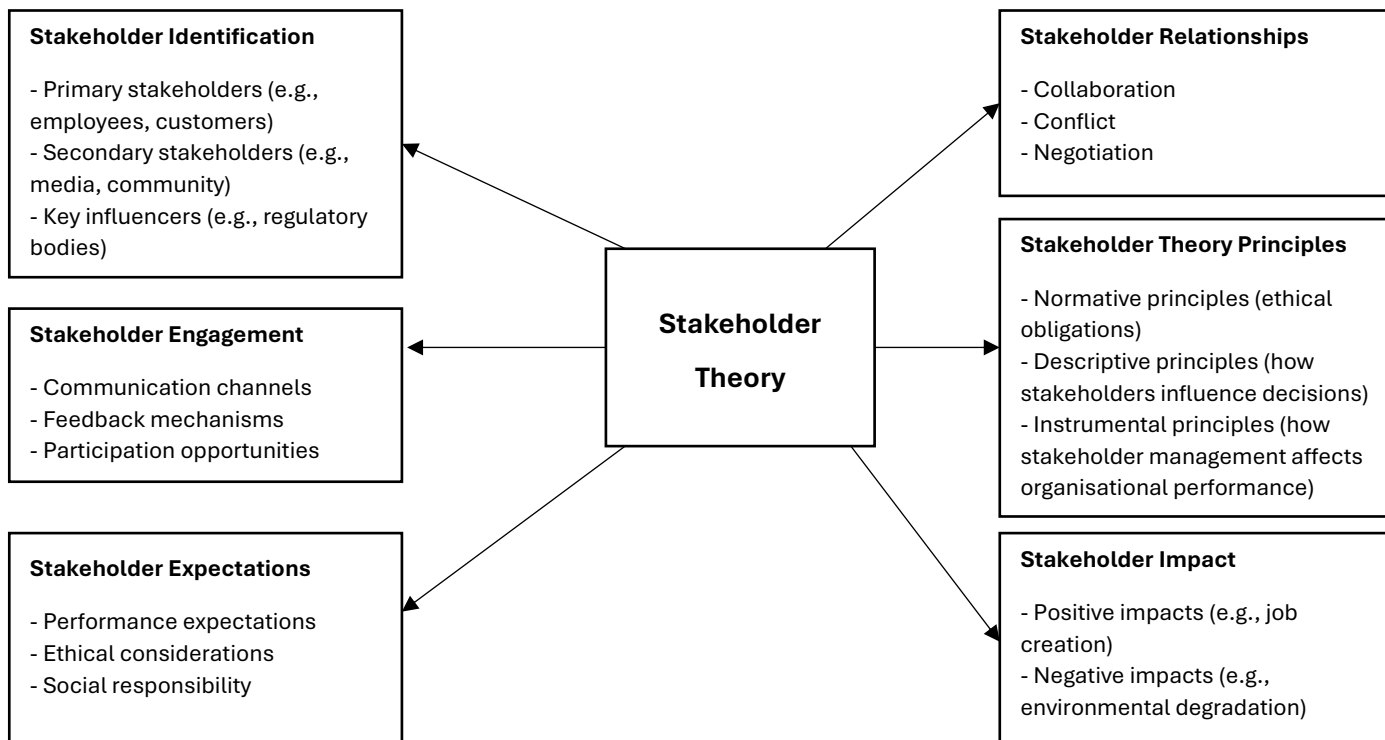


Figure 3: Stakeholder Theory Source: Researcher (2024)

4.3 Integration of the Theories

The integration of institutional theory and stakeholder theory provides a robust and comprehensive framework for examining TM practices in Kuwaiti HEIs. These theories present various and yet understandable approaches that, when integrated, reveal a thorough analysis of organisational behaviour, particularly within complex and dynamic institutional contexts identical to those found in HE. Institutional theory is concerned with how organisations respond to external pressures, especially environmental demands; on the other hand, stakeholder theory looks at methods used to manage stakeholder relationships within organisations. By integrating these two viewpoints, a more coherent approach to consider TM practices and their connection to external pressures informing institutional behaviour in HEIs.

4.3.1 Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory: A Complementary Relationship

Institutional theory focuses on institutions as the context within which organisations exist and function that incorporates societal norms, rules, and requirements concerning organisational behaviour into the analysis. This theory posits that organisations often conform to external pressures, including regulatory demands, industry standards, and cultural norms, to gain legitimacy and for them to survive. On the other hand, stakeholder theory focuses on the management of relationships with diverse and different groups that have an interest in the organisation; these may include customers, employees, students, faculty, regulators, and members of the public. It deals with the way these various stakeholders' expectations are managed, with most of them giving conflicting demands to ensure the organisation gains long-term success.

The incorporation of these two theories gives a more straightforward explanation on how organisations such as the HEIs, navigate the external environment around them despite the many challenges that they face as well as meeting the expectations of the critical stakeholders. Whereas institutional theory brings our attention to the external, macro-level factors that shape organisations, stakeholder theory focuses on processes at the micro level that might influence the organisations' response to these pressures. Combined, these theories offer a robust framework for understanding how HEIs manage TM practices in the face of both institutional expectations and stakeholder demands.

4.3.2 Existing Literature

Several studies drawn from CSR, sustainability, and Integrated Reporting (IR) offer a wealth of information on the benefits of integrating institutional and stakeholder theories. These studies show how learning from both the theories provide better insight into the subject of organisational behaviour and decision-making (Aburaya, 2024; Lee, 2011; Jamali, Lund-Thomsen, & Khara, 2017). Fernando (2014) proposed an integrated model of institutional and stakeholder theories to account for CSR initiatives' drivers. The study identified three key motivations: legitimacy, stakeholder responsibility and compliance to society (Fernando, 2014). While institutional theory served as an umbrella under which one could find an understanding of shifts within society, stakeholder theory offered an understanding of certain expectations as voiced by various stakeholders. This advantage is significant as the integration of both theories provides a more comprehensive analysis of the factors that explain individual behaviour within organisations.

Herold (2018) further developed this argument and explored the impact of institutional complexity along with stakeholder pressures on various sustainability reporting practises. Institutional theory helps explain the macro-level pressures that arise from competing institutional logics, such as the growing emphasis on environmental sustainability. In contrast, stakeholder theory explains how firms manage these pressures with an understanding of how shareholders, customers, and other regulatory agencies want or need the firm to behave. By applying both theories in tandem, Herold's study (2018) highlights how organisations navigate external expectations and internal priorities, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex dynamics at play.

Similarly, Lee (2011) explored how CSR strategies, ranging from obstructionist to proactive, are shaped by the interplay of institutional and stakeholder pressures. Institutional theory offers a structural perspective as to the source of organisational legitimacy pressures, including legal-imperative mechanisms and norms, while stakeholder theory aligns those pressures with either the magnifying or moderating effect of external constituents. It was realised that this integration made it easier to appreciate why different organisational structures adopt different strategies even in similar external conditions.

Martínez et al. (2016) also applied an integrated framework of institutional and stakeholder theories to explain socially responsible behaviour as a strategy for gaining legitimacy and competitiveness. Their study also discussed that while institutional theory deals with the macro level of an organisation's obligations

concerning overall social norms, stakeholder theory deals with micro-level obligations to certain groups of stakeholders. They also noted such a convergence of legitimacy and accountability to propose that the two theories must be taken together and that combining these theories provides a framework within which organisational behaviours and decisions can be studied and understood.

Lastly, Lakhani and Herbert (2022) analysed how institutional and stakeholder theories explain IR practices. In their study, institutional theory provided a macro-level lens for understanding broader trends and norms. In contrast, stakeholder theory brought attention to the micro-level concerns related to transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement. This is where this dual-theory approach has practical implications for TM in HEIs. The Kuwaitisation policy is an institutional norm characteristic of TM in many Kuwait HEIs and intersects with stakeholder-driven demands for fairness, equity, and development opportunities within HEIs.

4.3.3 Institutional and Stakeholder Theories in Relation to Talent Management

The integration of institutional and stakeholder theories is especially relevant to TM in HE. TM in HEIs is a multifaceted process with several external factors that determine the policies and practises of the institution and internal factors that stem from the expectations of different stakeholders. The combination of these two theories allows for a deeper understanding of the forces that shape TM practices, as well as the strategies that HEIs adopt to balance competing demands.

Institutional theory can still be useful for analysing the impact of externally driven factors on TM practises in HEIs. For example, national workforce development strategies such as Kuwaitisation, which aimed at enhancing the representation of Kuwaiti people in the workforce, influence the composition and TM model in HEIs. These policies foster external forces that HEIs need to understand in their quest to harmonise their workforce strategy with the nation's agenda. Institutional theory helps explain why HEIs in Kuwait may adopt certain TM practices, such as prioritising the recruitment of Kuwaiti nationals, to maintain legitimacy and comply with regulatory requirements.

On the other hand, the stakeholder theory offers an understanding of the micro-level dynamics that affect implementation of TM practises in HEIs. HEIs are not only affected by external policies but also by the demands of internal customers, administrators, faculty, and students. For instance, faculty and other stakeholders will have expectations in relation to salaries and wages, staff and faculty development, and job promotions, while students will have expectations in relation to teaching and their learning processes. Stakeholder theory helps to identify how HEIs manage these varying demands and how they balance the interests of different groups to create an effective and sustainable TM strategy.

By integrating institutional and stakeholder theories, it becomes clear that HEIs must manage a delicate balance between compliance with external institutional pressures and responsiveness to the demands of internal stakeholders. This approach also highlights the role of HEIs in shaping the broader societal context. HEIs are not passive recipients of external pressures; rather, they actively engage with institutional

norms and stakeholder groups to shape the development of TM practices that reflect both societal expectations and organisational priorities.

4.3.4 The Application of the Framework to Talent Management in Kuwaiti HEIs

The integration of institutional and stakeholder theories helps to recognise the difficulties and prospects of TM in the context of Kuwaiti HEIs. The context that influences the growth of HE in Kuwait is rendered by the specific national workforce policies and regulations, as well as the culture and norms prevalent in the society. Nevertheless, Kuwaiti HEIs are under pressure from several stakeholders including the government, academics, students, and the public.

One of the primary challenges that Kuwaiti HEIs face in managing talent is the need to comply with national workforce policies, such as Kuwaitisation, while also meeting the needs and expectations of faculty members, students, and other stakeholders. Applying both institutional and stakeholder theories provides an understanding of how these competing pressures are managed by the HEIs in Kuwait. On one hand, there are external pressures, for example related to the development of the human resources where the HEIs focus on the necessity to involve more local Kuwaiti citizens into the workforce. On the other hand, all HEI stakeholders' demands such as the need for competitive salaries, PD, the quality of teaching influences the way the HEIs develop the TM practises.

Accordingly, the integrated framework emphasises consideration of how HEIs can manage competing stakeholder demands, which are generally incompatible, as well as meet institutional processes' requirements. For instance, although faculties may negotiate for increased wages and improved employment conditions, HEIs must also look at the societal and national personnel policies within which they operate, and which may restrict their ability to offer such sweeteners. Considering the institutional and stakeholder theory, this research offers a nuanced view of the drivers of TM practises in Kuwaiti HEIs and actionable advice on how to align these practises with the needs of the organisations as well as external requirements.

4.3.5 Strengthening Up the Framework for Research

The decision to integrate institutional and stakeholder theories in this study is both theoretically and practically justified. Empirical findings from CSR, sustainability, and IR research demonstrate the value of these theories in capturing the multifaceted nature of organisational practices. By applying this integrated framework to TM, this study not only advances theoretical understanding but also provides actionable insights for HEIs in Kuwait.

Furthermore, this study contributes to addressing critical gaps in the literature, particularly the limited application of institutional and stakeholder theories to TM and their underrepresentation in non-Western contexts. While much of the existing research on these theories has focused on Western settings, this study provides a unique contribution by applying these frameworks to the context of Kuwaiti HEIs, offering new insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by institutions in this region.

Therefore, the integration of institutional and stakeholder theories offers a powerful lens for examining TM practices in HEIs. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping TM and provides a framework for developing strategies that balance institutional, and stakeholder demands. By addressing these dynamics in the Kuwaiti HEI context, this study contributes to a more nuanced and holistic understanding of TM, bridging theoretical insights with practical applications. This integrated approach also opens new avenues for future research on TM in non-Western contexts, providing a valuable foundation for the continued development of this field (Refer to figure 4).

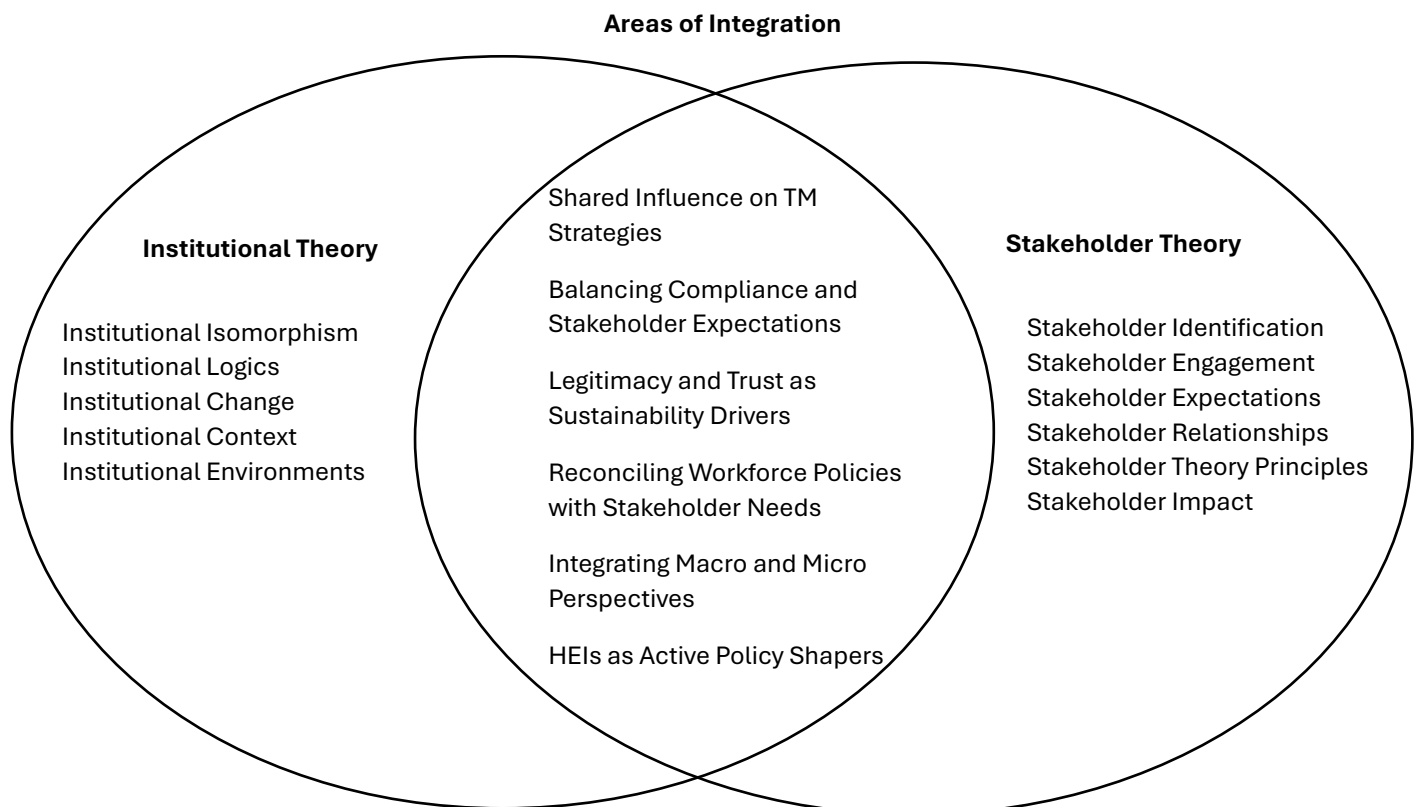


Figure 4: Integration of Theories: Researcher (2024)

4.4 The Intersection of Institutional and Stakeholder Theories in TM within Kuwaiti HEIs

The integration of Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory offers a robust framework for analysing TM in Kuwaiti HEIs. These theories illuminate how external institutional pressures and internal stakeholder dynamics shape TM strategies. At their intersection lies the critical challenge of balancing regulatory compliance with stakeholder expectations, a key determinant of effective TM in HEIs.

HEIs operate under national workforce policies, such as Kuwaitisation, that dictate hiring priorities, while simultaneously navigating administrators, faculty, and student expectations regarding recruitment, development, and working conditions. This dual influence necessitates TM strategies that comply with institutional mandates while addressing stakeholder concerns. While HEIs must prioritise hiring Kuwaiti nationals to align with government policies, they must also ensure that faculty appointments uphold academic excellence and institutional sustainability.

HEIs face accountability to both government regulations and internal stakeholders who demand fair employment conditions, professional growth, and quality education. Reconciling these demands requires strategic TM approaches that maintain institutional legitimacy while satisfying stakeholder interests. National policies may emphasise local hiring, faculty may advocate for international expertise to sustain academic standards, prompting HEIs to adopt hybrid hiring models.

HEIs must secure external legitimacy while fostering internal trust among faculty and students. Failure to comply risks losing government support, whereas neglecting stakeholder concerns may lead to faculty dissatisfaction and student disengagement. Thus, sustainable TM strategies must harmonise these competing pressures.

Institutional Theory explains how external forces shape TM policies, while Stakeholder Theory reveals how internal groups influence and respond to these policies. Effective TM requires synthesising both perspectives, ensuring alignment with national objectives while addressing stakeholder needs. For example, leadership development programs for Kuwaiti faculty can satisfy workforce mandates while preparing them for administrative roles. HEIs are not passive entities but strategic adaptors, refining their TM practices to balance societal expectations with institutional priorities. By continuously adjusting TM strategies such as enhancing faculty development initiatives, HEIs maintain legitimacy while advancing academic and operational effectiveness.

4.5 Chapter Summary

Chapter Four of the study focuses on the theoretical framework guiding the study. It outlines how Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory provide a comprehensive understanding of TM practices in this unique Kuwaiti context. Institutional Theory investigates how embedded norms, regulations, and cultural values influence organisational behaviour and TM practices. It highlights how HEIs adapt to external pressures and adopt standardised practices to gain legitimacy and ensure stability. This theory helps explain the mechanisms through which HEIs align their TM practices with regulatory standards, accreditation requirements, and global trends. In contrast, Stakeholder Theory examines the roles and impacts of various stakeholders, including administrators, faculty, students, and regulatory bodies, on TM practices. This underscores the significance of effectively managing these relationships to meet stakeholder needs and expectations. This theory provides insights into how HEIs can design TM practices that address the diverse interests of their stakeholders. The integration of both theories offers a comprehensive perspective, illustrating how institutional norms and stakeholder expectations interact to shape TM practices. This combined framework helps in understanding the complex dynamics of TM in Kuwaiti HEIs. The next chapter details the research design and methodology for this study.

Chapter 5: Research Design and Methodology

5.0 Introduction

This qualitative single case study examines how administrators, faculty, and students perceive the implementation and evaluation of TM practices in a HEI in Kuwait. Chapter Five includes an outline of the data collection and data analysis process. The chapter begins by discussing the qualitative method's appropriateness and the explanatory single-case design. The rationale for selecting the qualitative approach and the process of using purposive sampling to select participants is discussed in this chapter. The chapter also includes a description of the population and sampling method, a presentation of the research's trustworthiness, and a discussion of the appropriateness of the efforts to ensure confidentiality and privacy.

The study explores how administrators, faculty, and students perceive the implementation and evaluation of TM practices in a HEI, University XYZ, in Kuwait.

5.1 Research Design

This study employs an exploratory qualitative research design. The chosen research design enables a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how administrators, faculty, and students perceive the implementation and evaluation of TM practices at University XYZ in Kuwait. Given the complexity of TM within HEIs, particularly in a region such as Kuwait where such practices are underexplored, this approach offers a robust and flexible framework for inquiry.

5.1.1 Ontological and Epistemological Foundations

The ontological foundation of this research aligns with constructivism, which asserts that reality is subjective and socially constructed by individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Constructivism contends that reality does not exist independently but is co-created through lived experiences, interactions, and social contexts. This stance is particularly relevant to TM practices at University XYZ, where administrators, faculty, and students hold various perspectives shaped by their roles, cultural backgrounds, and experiences within the institution. Rather than treating TM as a static or universally understood concept, the research recognises that its implementation and evaluation are dynamic and contextually defined by stakeholders.

For instance, while administrators might view TM through the lens of institutional policies and workforce planning, faculty members may perceive it in terms of career development opportunities, and students may focus on its impact on learning experiences and academic outcomes. This diversity of perspectives necessitates an ontological foundation that acknowledges multiple realities and embraces subjectivity as a valid basis for understanding organisational phenomena.

From an epistemological standpoint, the study is grounded in interpretivism, which prioritises understanding social phenomena through the lens of those experiencing it (Bryman, 2016). Interpretivism challenges the positivist belief in objective and value-free knowledge, instead emphasising the importance of context, interaction, and interpretation in constructing meaning (Finlay & Ballinger, 2006). This philosophy is particularly suited for exploring complex, human-centred topics such as TM practices, where understanding stakeholders' perceptions requires an in-depth exploration of their experiences, beliefs, and interpretations.

In line with interpretivist epistemology, the research relies on qualitative methods, semi-structured interviews, to capture the multifaceted and context-specific realities of TM practices at University XYZ. By engaging with participants directly and exploring their narratives, the study generates insights that reflect their lived experiences and interpretations, offering a holistic understanding of TM within the institutional and cultural context.

5.1.2 Exploratory Approach

This research adopts an exploratory approach to investigate a relatively underexamined phenomenon TM practices in Kuwaiti HEIs. According to Stebbins (2001), exploratory research is particularly valuable when existing knowledge is limited, as it allows researchers to explore new areas of inquiry, generate initial insights, and identify key factors shaping the phenomenon under investigation. Given the lack of comprehensive research on TM practices in Kuwaiti HE, an exploratory approach provides the flexibility to uncover previously unrecognised themes, relationships, and challenges.

The study focuses on understanding the facilitators, barriers, and outcomes of TM implementation as perceived by stakeholders. According to Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub (1996), this approach allows the researcher to pose broad, open-ended questions that encourage participants to share their experiences and insights without constraint. For example, administrators might highlight challenges such as resource allocation or policy alignment, while faculty members may discuss the need for PD and recognition.

5.2 Case Study Design

This research adopts a qualitative single-case study design to examine the implementation and evaluation of TM practices at University XYZ in Kuwait. A case study approach is particularly suitable for investigating complex, real-world phenomena within a specific and bounded context, offering deep insights into how TM practices are understood, operationalised, and challenged within the institution (Yin, 2014). Given the lack of existing research on TM practices in HEIs in Kuwait, a single-case study provides a detailed, context-specific exploration of stakeholder perceptions, institutional dynamics, and TM challenges.

5.2.1 Rationale for Single-Case Design

Yin (2014) categorises case studies into three types: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. This study employs an exploratory case study design as it investigates an under-researched topic and seeks to

generate new insights into TM practices within HEIs. Exploratory case studies are particularly effective when little is known about a phenomenon, as they allow the researcher to identify patterns, relationships, and themes that contribute to a broader understanding of the subject matter (Hoaglin, Mosteller, & Tukey, 2000).

The single-case study approach is justified by the uniqueness of University XYZ as a critical case within the Kuwaiti HE landscape. University XYZ serves as an ideal setting for examining TM practices in depth, given its role as a microcosm that reflects the challenges and opportunities faced by other HEIs in the region. The institution's strategic importance, coupled with its exposure to external influences such as Kuwaitisation and resource limitations, makes it a valuable case for studying TM in a real-life institutional context where cultural, structural, and leadership factors interact.

Stake (1995) further differentiates case studies into intrinsic, instrumental, and collective types. This study adopts an intrinsic case study design, as it focuses on understanding University XYZ's TM practices as a unique case of interest. The intrinsic nature of this case arises from the researcher's desire to gain an in-depth understanding of the specific organisational and cultural dynamics shaping TM implementation within the institution. While the findings may have implications for other HEIs, the primary goal is to explore the phenomenon within its unique institutional context.

5.2.2 Strengths of the Single-Case Design

One of the strengths of a single case study is its in-depth exploration. A single-case study allows for a detailed and holistic investigation of TM practices at University XYZ, capturing the complexities and nuances that broader studies might overlook (Yin, 2014). The study collects rich, contextualised data by examining the perspectives of administrators, faculty, and students. This depth of exploration ensures that the study identifies not only the visible elements of TM practices, such as policies and processes, but also the underlying challenges, facilitators, and stakeholder perceptions that shape their implementation.

Another strength is its contextual relevance. Case studies excel in examining real-life phenomena within their specific contexts. At University XYZ, TM practices are deeply influenced by institutional goals, national policies (e.g., Kuwaitisation), cultural dynamics, and leadership decisions. The case study design enables the researcher to investigate TM practices within this bounded context, acknowledging the interdependence between institutional processes and the broader socio-cultural environment (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Thirdly, single case studies allow for multiple perspectives. A significant strength of the single-case study lies in its ability to capture diverse stakeholder perspectives. By employing methods such as semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and observations, the study ensures that multiple voices of administrators, faculty, and students are represented. This triangulation of data sources not only enhances the validity and reliability of the findings but also provides a comprehensive understanding of TM practices from various angles (Yin, 2014).

The single-case study design also allows for the integration of multiple qualitative methods to gather in-depth data (Stake, 1995). The flexibility to adapt data collection techniques, such as probing deeper into emerging themes during interviews or analysing documents that reflect institutional policies, ensures that the study remains responsive to the research context and objectives. This adaptability is particularly valuable for uncovering unexpected insights that may not emerge in more rigid research designs.

Finally, by focusing on a single institution, the study generates insights that contribute to broader theoretical discussions on TM in HEIs (Hitchcock & Onwuegbuzie, 2022). The findings are analysed through the lenses of Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory, providing a deeper understanding of how organisational structures, cultural values, and stakeholder expectations influence TM practices. This theoretical contribution is significant, as it bridges the gap between TM theory and practice in underexplored contexts such as Kuwait.

5.2.3 Weaknesses of the Single-Case Design

While the single-case study design offers considerable strengths, it also has limitations that must be acknowledged. One of the weaknesses is limited generalisability. Findings from a single case may not be directly applicable to other HEIs due to contextual differences. However, as Yin (2014) argues, the goal of case study research is analytic generalisation rather than statistical generalisation. This means that the findings contribute to theoretical understanding, offering insights that can inform similar contexts or future research. To enhance transferability, the study provides a detailed description of the institutional context, allowing readers to assess the relevance of the findings to their own settings.

Secondly, there is the issue of the researcher's bias. The qualitative nature of a case study research may introduce subjectivity, as the researcher plays a central role in data collection, analysis, and interpretation (McGregor, 2017). To mitigate this risk, the study employs data triangulation, systematic coding processes, and reflexivity. Reflexivity ensures that the researcher remains aware of their biases and actively works to ground the findings in the data rather than preconceived notions.

In addition, conducting a single-case study requires significant time and effort, particularly for in-depth data collection and analysis. The researcher must balance the desire for depth with practical constraints, such as access to participants, institutional support, and time limitations (Franklin, Allison, & Gorman, 2014). To address this, the study adopts a clear methodological plan and prioritises data collection techniques that provide the greatest depth and richness of information.

Lastly, there is a risk of overgeneralising findings from University XYZ to other HEIs. While the study acknowledges this limitation, it also argues that the case provides valuable insights into broader trends and challenges related to TM practices in Kuwaiti HE. By situating the findings within their institutional and cultural context, the study avoids making unwarranted generalisations.

5.2.4 Talent Management Practices at University XYZ

5.2.4.1 Introduction

The study of TM practices at University XYZ highlights significant gaps in their strategic implementation. Existing efforts appear fragmented and lack a cohesive framework to address both current and future institutional needs effectively. Recruitment and selection processes at the university are largely reactive, focusing on immediate staffing requirements rather than aligning with long-term objectives. Although formal hiring procedures are in place, they do not incorporate strategic planning to attract and retain high-quality talent, which limits the institution's capacity to build a sustainable workforce. For example, hiring decisions often prioritise filling vacancies over broader considerations, such as fostering diversity or aligning with institutional goals.

PD opportunities for faculty and staff are sporadic and poorly integrated into career development pathways. Training programs tend to operate with limited resources, often failing to address specific skill gaps or align with individual aspirations or institutional priorities. Faculty members have expressed the need for tailored development initiatives, such as mentorship programs, workshops, and enhanced research support, to better equip them for advancing the university's mission. Without consistent investment in such programs, the potential for faculty and staff growth remains underutilised.

Employee engagement and retention present further challenges. The absence of structured strategies in these areas has led to concerns about high turnover rates and declining motivation. Faculty members report insufficient recognition and limited career advancement opportunities, which hinder job satisfaction and long-term commitment. Administrators acknowledge the need for more comprehensive retention policies, including transparent career progression pathways, competitive compensation, and initiatives that foster inclusivity and collaboration within the workplace. These gaps underline the importance of creating a more supportive environment to maintain institutional stability and employee satisfaction.

PM systems at the university are similarly inconsistent and often lack follow-up mechanisms to drive continuous improvement. Current evaluation processes are perceived as procedural rather than developmental, offering limited actionable feedback for professional growth. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of implementing transparent and constructive systems that promote accountability while supporting career advancement. Integrating regular feedback and follow-up measures would enhance the effectiveness of these evaluations and contribute to a culture of excellence.

While University XYZ has established foundational TM practices, there is an opportunity to further enhance their strategic approach to effectively attract, retain talent. Strengthening this alignment can support institutional goals and contribute to cultivating a dynamic, high-performing workforce.

5.2.4.2 Institutional Challenges Impacting TM Practices

TM practices at University XYZ face significant institutional challenges that contribute to their fragmented nature. Leadership plays a pivotal role in TM, yet limited support from institutional leaders has impeded the alignment of TM strategies with broader organisational goals. Competing priorities further divert attention from developing cohesive and effective TM practices.

Resources constraints also pose a major hurdle. Financial and human resource limitations hinder the university's ability to implement robust TM initiatives. Key efforts such as training programs, retention strategies, and comprehensive recruitment frameworks remain underfunded or underdeveloped, weakening the institution's capacity to attract and retain talent effectively.

Cultural dynamics within Kuwait significantly influence TM practices. The emphasis on Kuwaitisation policies, which prioritise the employment of local talent, reflects national labour market goals. However, these policies create additional challenges for the university as it seeks to balance national priorities with institutional needs. Stakeholders face the complex task of aligning policy-driven objectives with the practical requirements of managing diverse talent pools.

The lack of a clearly articulated institutional vision for TM further exacerbates these challenges. Without a unified strategy, TM practices remain disjointed, and progress is limited. Stakeholders repeatedly highlighted the importance of strategic planning that integrates TM into the university's long-term goals. Addressing this gap requires intentional efforts to define and communicate an overarching vision that aligns TM initiatives with the institution's mission and future aspirations.

Together, these challenges underscore the need for University XYZ to adopt a more strategic and resource-supported approach to TM. By fostering stronger leadership commitment, addressing resource limitations, navigating cultural dynamics, and clarifying its institutional vision, the university can build a more cohesive and effective TM framework that aligns with its organisational goals and the broader socio-economic context.

5.2.4.3 Justification for Focusing on the Implementation of Existing TM Processes

The decision to focus on the implementation of existing TM processes rather than their development was guided by the study's aim to explore the practical realities of TM practices at University XYZ. While the development phase primarily involves strategic planning, formulation of policies, and theoretical alignment, the implementation phase reflects how these strategies are executed, adapted, and experienced by stakeholders within the institution. Examining implementation offers a more dynamic perspective on the challenges, enablers, and outcomes of TM practices, allowing for an in-depth understanding of how theoretical frameworks such as Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory manifest in real-world scenarios.

Moreover, focusing on implementation addresses a key gap in the existing literature, which often emphasises the conceptual design of TM frameworks but provides limited insights into their

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operationalisation and effectiveness in specific cultural and institutional contexts. This study prioritises implementation because it is the stage where the impact of TM practices on administrators, faculty, and students becomes most apparent. By examining this critical phase, the research contributes to identifying practical solutions for improving TM practices and ensuring their alignment with organisational goals and stakeholder expectations, particularly in the unique socio-cultural context of Kuwait.

5.3 Data Collection Methods

The research method establishes the plan and design of a study (Cooper & Schindler, 2008). A qualitative case study is the most appropriate method for interpreting how administrators, faculty, and students perceive the implementation and evaluation of TM practices in HEIs in Kuwait. Qualitative researchers seek to understand a research problem or topic from the perspectives of the study's population and use multiple designs to explain the research questions and analysis. Designs associated with qualitative research include case studies, ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and case studies. This qualitative study included an explanatory single case study (Christensen et al., 2010).

5.3.1 A Qualitative Approach

A qualitative approach is the most appropriate method for understanding how administrators, faculty, and students perceive the implementation and evaluation of TM practices in HEIs in Kuwait. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), researchers should use the qualitative method to understand perceptions from the participant's point of view. Qualitative research effectively obtains culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours, and social contexts of populations (Yin, 2003).

A qualitative method is used to explore how administrators, faculty, and students perceive the implementation and evaluation of TM practices in a HEI in Kuwait. According to Patton (2002), qualitative research is suitable for understanding the meaning that participants in a study give to events, situations, and actions. Patton (2002) concluded that researchers who choose a qualitative method would obtain a variety of aspects regarding a social situation using the flexibility of an in-depth analysis. Qualitative research methods are essential for understanding human perceptions, answering how or why questions, and exploring complex phenomena in depth (Yin, 2014). These methods are particularly suited for studies such as this one, which aims to analyse detailed accounts of significant themes related to implementing and evaluating TM practices in HEIs in Kuwait. Qualitative research allows for an in-depth exploration of key influencing factors through rich, descriptive data collected from interviews, observations, artefacts, and audio recordings (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003).

Qualitative researchers focus on describing and explaining phenomena rather than predicting or quantifying them. This approach is valuable for capturing the nuanced perspectives of administrators, faculty, and students on TM practices. By drawing on an inductive process, themes and categories emerge organically from the data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. For instance, qualitative studies in educational settings have revealed critical insights into stakeholder perceptions, SA, Aftimos, DBA Thesis, Aston University 2024

decision-making processes, and the contextual factors influencing educational outcomes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

One example of the efficacy of qualitative research is a study by Marshall and Rossman (2016), which explored the implementation of leadership development programmes in universities. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with programme participants and administrators, uncovering the challenges and successes experienced during the programme. This qualitative approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of the programme's impact, which would have been challenging to capture through quantitative methods alone.

5.3.2 A Quantitative Approach

In contrast, quantitative research methods aim to explain what, how much, or how many by relying on numerical data and statistical analysis (Yin, 2014). Quantitative research is highly structured and uses deductive reasoning to test hypotheses and establish generalisable findings. This approach is beneficial for studies requiring precise measurement and comparison of variables, such as evaluating the effectiveness of TM practices across different institutions or quantifying the relationship between specific TM practices and organisational outcomes.

However, the structured nature of quantitative research can be a limitation when studying complex, context-dependent subjects, such as TM in HEIs. Quantitative methods may not capture the full depth of human experiences and the intricate factors influencing TM practices. For instance, a quantitative study by Smith et al. (2019) evaluated the correlation between faculty retention rates and specific TM initiatives using survey data and statistical models. While the study provided valuable numerical insights, it lacks the depth of understanding regarding the underlying reasons for faculty members' decisions to stay or leave.

Critically, quantitative research often falls short in exploring the subjective experiences and contextual factors that qualitative research excels at uncovering. For example, a purely quantitative approach to studying TM practices might miss the unique cultural, organisational, and personal dynamics that qualitative methods can reveal. Quantitative studies may also struggle to adapt to the evolving nature of TM practices, which qualitative research can capture through iterative data collection and analysis.

While both qualitative and quantitative research methods have their merits, qualitative research is more appropriate for this study on TM practices in Kuwaiti HEIs, particularly at University XYZ. The qualitative approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the complex, context-specific factors influencing TM practices, which quantitative methods may not fully capture. By employing qualitative methods, this study aims to provide rich, detailed insights into the perceptions and experiences of key stakeholders (administrators, faculty, and students), ultimately contributing to the effective implementation and evaluation of TM practices at University XYZ. This study involves analysing detailed accounts of significant themes related to the implementation and evaluation of TM practices, as well as identifying the key influencing factors. The qualitative method is more suitable than the quantitative method because

quantitative researchers rely on numbers to reveal statistical findings. Quantitative researchers seek a deductive approach and highly structured instruments to collect data (Yin, 2003). This contrasts with qualitative research, which is non-statistical.

Qualitative research is a nonstatistical method of inquiry and analysis of social phenomena. Qualitative researchers draw on an inductive process where themes and categories emerge through rigorous analysis of collected data. In a qualitative study, data can be collected through interviews, observations, artefacts, and audio recordings (Yin, 2003).

5.3.3 Justification for the Qualitative Research Design

The qualitative research design is chosen because it aligns with the study's overarching goal: to understand the subjective experiences and contextual factors shaping TM practices. Unlike quantitative methods that focus on numerical measurement and generalisability, qualitative research allows for a deeper, more contextual exploration of meanings, perceptions, and lived realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

In the case of TM practices at University XYZ, a qualitative approach provides several advantages. One of the advantages of qualitative research is flexibility. Qualitative research allows the researcher to adapt data collection methods, probe deeper into emerging themes, and explore unanticipated insights (Flick, 2011). This flexibility is particularly important when investigating a socially complex and dynamic phenomenon as TM.

Secondly, qualitative methods allow for a deeper understanding of issues (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). Qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews, enable participants to articulate their perspectives in their own words, providing rich, detailed accounts of their experiences. For example, an administrator may describe challenges in aligning TM practices with institutional goals, while a faculty member may share personal experiences of career progression and recognition.

Also, by focusing on a specific institutional context, University XYZ, the qualitative approach captures the cultural, organisational, and social dynamics influencing TM practices. This context-specific understanding is crucial for developing insights that are relevant and actionable within the Kuwaiti HEI setting.

In addition, qualitative methods accommodate the diverse viewpoints of stakeholders, allowing for a holistic understanding of TM practices. By engaging administrators, faculty, and students, the study highlights the interplay between different perspectives and identifies areas of convergence and divergence.

Moreover, qualitative research facilitates the uncovering of unexpected insights that may not emerge through quantitative studies (Cardano, 2020). For instance, open-ended interviews might reveal informal or unrecognised TM practices that contribute to faculty retention and engagement. These insights can inform future policy development and provide a more comprehensive understanding of TM dynamics.

5.3.4 Research Questions

The central research question is a significant determinant of the research methodology, providing direction and focus to the study (Yin, 2003). In the context of this research on TM practices in HEIs in Kuwait, the research questions are designed to address specific gaps identified in the literature review. They are grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory.

The literature highlights a lack of comprehensive understanding of how TM practices are implemented and evaluated in HEIs, particularly in the unique socio-cultural context of Kuwait. Previous studies have predominantly focused on Western contexts, with limited exploration of the Middle Eastern educational landscape (Al-Tameemi & Alshawi, 2014; Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014). Furthermore, there is a need for a more in-depth analysis of the factors influencing TM practices and the perspectives of various stakeholders within HEIs (Gosling et al., 2009). The theoretical frameworks provide a lens through which to examine how HEIs in Kuwait align with institutional norms and external pressures. The research questions seek to fill the gap by investigating how these practices are carried out in the Kuwaiti context, considering both the theoretical expectations and practical realities.

Based on these gaps, the following central research question and sub-research questions have been developed:

5.3.5 Central Research Questions

RQ1: How are talent management practices implemented and evaluated in a higher educational institution in Kuwait?

RQ2: What are the key influencing factors impacting talent management practices in a higher educational institution in Kuwait?

5.3.6 Sub-Research Questions

The study had four sub-research questions:

SRQ1: How do institutional vision and policies influence talent management practices in higher educational institutions?

Institutional theory emphasises the importance of aligning with institutional norms and pressures to gain legitimacy and stability (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2008). The literature highlights that organisational vision, and policies significantly shape TM practices (Farndale et al., 2020). This sub-question is derived from the need to understand how these elements influence TM practices in Kuwaiti HEIs, particularly at University XYZ, which may differ from those in Western contexts due to unique local institutional pressures and norms.

SRQ2: What are the internal and external factors that facilitate and restrain the implementation of talent management policies and practices?

Previous studies have identified various internal and external factors affecting TM, such as organisational culture, leadership, and external labour market conditions (Collings, Scullion, & Vaiman, 2015). This

research seeks to identify these factors within the context of University XYZ, providing a localised understanding of facilitators and barriers.

SRQ3: What processes and criteria are used to identify, develop, and retain talent within the institution, and how effective are these processes?

The effectiveness of TM processes in identifying, developing, and retaining talent is crucial for organisational success (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). Nevertheless, there is a gap in the academic literature regarding the specific processes used in Kuwaiti HEIs and their effectiveness, which this study aims to address. Based on the identified gap mentioned in Chapter One, this study focuses on University XYZ. By focusing on how these processes are applied and their effectiveness, the research aims to contribute valuable insights into the practical aspects of TM, informed by both Institutional theory and Stakeholder theory.

SRQ4: How do stakeholders within the organisation, including faculty and administrative staff, perceive and contribute to talent management practices?

Stakeholder perceptions and contributions are vital for the successful implementation of TM practices (Bryant & Allen, 2013). This research will explore the views of administrators, faculty, and students in Kuwaiti HEIs, providing insights into their roles and perspectives on TM. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these stakeholders perceive and contribute to TM, thereby filling a gap identified in the literature regarding stakeholder perspectives in non-Western educational contexts.

5.3.7 Interview Protocol Development

The research questions outlined in this study serve as the foundation for both the research methodology and the development of the interview protocol. The alignment between the research questions and the interview guide ensures that data collection directly addresses the study's central and sub-research questions. This section discusses the process undertaken to develop the interview protocol, modifications made to accommodate different audiences, and the rationale for each set of questions.

5.3.8 Development of Interview Questions

The interview protocol was designed to gather data that answers the central and sub-research questions while considering the unique perspectives of administrators, faculty members, and students. The interview protocol (refer to Appendix A³) includes the full list of questions categorised by theme (e.g., Institutional Theory, Stakeholder Theory, evaluation of TM practices) and audience (administrators, faculty members, students). The development process involved:

5.3.8.1 Linking Interview Questions to Research Questions

Each interview question aligns with one or more of the central or sub-research questions. Questions regarding institutional policies, external and internal factors, and stakeholder contributions reflect the

³ The interview protocol ensures transparency and allows for a clear understanding of how data collection was structured to address the research questions.

theoretical frameworks of Institutional Theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2008) and Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984; Bryant & Allen, 2013).

Adapting to the Audience

The interview questions were modified slightly to reflect the different stakeholder groups administrators, faculty, and students. Administrators were asked questions that focused on decision-making, policy implementation, and institutional strategies. Faculty members were asked questions related to their experiences with recruitment, retention, and development processes. Students were asked questions regarding their perceptions of institutional talent and faculty capabilities. Questions were reviewed to ensure clarity and relevance for each stakeholder group, avoiding jargon or overly technical language. Pilot testing of the questions was conducted with a small subset of participants to identify areas requiring refinement. To elicit detailed, narrative responses, the interview protocol relied heavily on open-ended questions. This approach aligns with the qualitative nature of the study, allowing participants to express their perspectives in depth. While the core themes of the interview protocol remained consistent across all stakeholders, minor modifications were made to address the specific context and expertise of each audience:

- Questions for administrators emphasised institutional vision, policy implementation, and the strategic decision-making process. Example: "How does the institutional vision influence the implementation of TM policies at the university?"
- Questions for faculty focused on their experiences with TM processes, including recruitment, retention, professional development, and alignment with institutional strategies. Example: "How are talent decisions made and communicated within your department?"
- Questions were adapted to reflect students' perspectives on teaching quality, faculty expertise, and institutional support. Example: "How would you describe the quality of faculty and its impact on your learning experience?"

These modifications ensured that the questioning remained relevant and comprehensible, while still addressing the broader research questions.

5.3.8.2 Linking Research Questions to the Interview Protocol

Table 3 below demonstrates how the interview questions align with the central and sub-research questions:

Table 3: Research Questions Alignment

Research Question	Sample Interview Questions
RQ1: How are TM practices implemented and evaluated in HEIs in Kuwait?	<i>Describe the talent management processes in your organisation.</i> <i>How does the university monitor and evaluate TM?</i>
RQ2: What are the key influencing factors impacting TM practices?	<i>What internal factors facilitate implementation of TM policies/practices?</i> <i>What external factors restrain implementation?</i>
SRQ1: How do institutional vision and policies influence TM practices?	<i>In what way does the institutional vision affect attitudes to TM practices?</i>
SRQ2: What are the internal and external factors facilitating or restraining TM?	<i>What internal/external factors influence TM practices at the university?</i>
SRQ3: What processes and criteria are used to identify, develop, and retain talent?	<i>How does the organisation identify critical job roles?</i> <i>How are skill gaps identified and addressed?</i>
SRQ4: How do stakeholders perceive and contribute to TM practices?	<i>Identify some of the crucial stakeholders to the university.</i>

5.3.8.3 Process of Developing Interview Questions

The development of the interview protocol followed a systematic process to ensure alignment with research objectives and participant contexts:

1. The interview questions were informed by findings from the literature review, particularly gaps in understanding TM practices within the Kuwaiti HE context (Al-Tameemi & Alshawhi, 2014; Sidani & Al Ariss, 2014).
2. Integration of Theoretical Frameworks also helped in creating the questions.
 - a. Institutional theory guided questions related to organisational vision, external pressures, and legitimacy.
 - b. Stakeholder Theory informed questions about stakeholder roles, contributions, and perceptions.
3. A preliminary version of the interview protocol was pilot tested with a small number of participants. Feedback from pilot testing helped refine wording, remove redundancy, and ensure clarity.
4. Academic peers and supervisors reviewed the interview protocol to validate its appropriateness and relevance to the research questions.

5.3.9 Students' Responses and Perceptions

The responses provided by the student participants were largely perception-based, as their insights stemmed from observations and experiences rather than direct involvement in our decision-making on

University XYZ's TM processes. Unlike administrators and faculty members, who are directly engaged with the implementation and evaluation of TM practices, students' responses reflect how these processes influence their learning environment, the quality of teaching, and the institution's overall academic performance. For instance, students offered perspectives on the effectiveness of faculty recruitment and retention based on their interactions with lecturers and observations of turnover or changes in teaching quality. While these beliefs may not provide detailed accounts of TM strategies, they offer valuable insights into how TM practices manifest from the viewpoint of one of the institution's key stakeholders. This distinction ensures that student responses contribute to understanding the broader impact and effectiveness of TM practices on the educational experience at University XYZ.

5.3.10 Population and Sample

The sample size is determined based on the research questions, the purpose of the study, and the available resources. The goal is to have a sample size that is large enough to provide meaningful results but small enough to be manageable. The population for this study includes nine faculty members, nine administrator members, and seven students from University XYZ, as shown in Table 4. Sampling will be purposive to select administrators, faculty, and students. The purposive sampling strategy involves the researcher selecting participants with a purpose or goal in mind (Palinkas et al., 2015). Researchers use purposeful sampling in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases for the most efficient use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). The use of purposive sampling will allow the researcher to compare, contrast, and identify similarities and differences in implementing TM. Purposive sampling is used to select administrators, faculty, and students to answer twenty open-ended questions. The sample population needed to be an administrator, faculty member, or student at University XYZ.

Table 4: Demographic Details

Students					Faculty					Administrators				
#	Code	Gender	Nationality	Level	#	Code	Gender	Nationality	Job Role	#	Code	Gender	Nationality	Job Role
1	S1	Male	National	3	1	F1	Male	Expatriate	Assistant Professor	1	A1	Female	Expatriate	Head of Department
2	S2	Female	National	2	2	F2	Female	Expatriate	Assistant Professor	2	A2	Male	Expatriate	Coordinator
3	S3	Female	National	3	3	F3	Female	Expatriate	Assistant Professor	3	A3	Male	Expatriate	Head of Department
4	S4	Male	National	3	4	F4	Male	Expatriate	Associate Professor	4	A4	Male	Expatriate	Head of Department
5	S5	Male	Expatriate	2	5	F5	Male	Expatriate	Senior Instructor	5	A5	Male	Expatriate	Head of Department
6	S6	Female	Expatriate	4	6	F6	Female	National	Instructor	6	A6	Female	Expatriate	Senior Manager
7	S7	Male	Expatriate	4	7	F7	Male	National	Assistant Professor	7	A7	Male	Expatriate	Executive Member
					8	F8	Male	National	Instructor	8	A8	Female	Expatriate	Senior Coordinator
					9	F9	Female	National	Assistant Professor	9	A9	Female	Expatriate	Manager
7					9					9				

5.3.11 Informed Consent and Ethical Considerations

There will be ethical issues with any research. Accordingly, to ensure that ethical standards are maintained, all opinions shared by the participants will be confidential. Ethical principles are fundamental to conducting research, ensuring that the relationship between researchers and participants is built on trust and integrity and preserving participants' freedom of choice regarding their involvement (Busher & Fox, 2019). Before sharing the consent form, an invitation letter is sent to the participants to obtain an overview of the research interview (Refer to Appendix B – Invitation Letter). Informed consent is a cornerstone of these ethical principles, requiring participants to fully understand their obligations and rights before voluntarily agreeing to participate in the research (Xu et al., 2020). This process involves providing comprehensive information, ensuring participant understanding, and securing a voluntary decision to participate. Permission is obtained from University XYZ's higher management to interview the required participants at University XYZ.

To facilitate informed consent, forms were distributed to all participants either via email or physically based on the agreed setting and arrangement of the interview (Refer to Appendix B – Consent form). Participants receive these forms before the interview begins and are required to read, sign and return them. Along with the consent forms, participants are provided with detailed information about the study (Refer to Appendix D – Participant Information Sheet). Signed consent forms are securely stored on the Aston University Portal - Box. Participants are explicitly informed that they will not receive any compensation or other benefits from participating in the study. Additionally, participants are disclosed to their right to withdraw from the study, following a fourteen-day duration by notifying the research team via email. Notably, no participants chose to withdraw from this research study. The researcher took significant measures to ensure the confidentiality and security of the collected data, by using Digital Services at Aston University. It was recommended to follow the 3-2-1 backup rule. These precautions ensure that only the research team has access to the confidential data, maintaining full discrepancy throughout the process. Lastly, stored data will follow Aston University guidelines for the deletion process of the confidential data.

Interview recordings were conducted with the participants' permission and destroyed after the participants verified the transcripts. Given the possibility of publishing the study results, any identifying information about the participants, their company, or their location is kept confidential.

Instrumentation in qualitative research refers to the tools used by researchers to collect, analyse, and measure variables or items of interest during data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Unlike traditional questionnaires, qualitative research often employs interview scripts to guide data collection. In this study, narrative inquiry will be the primary method used to understand the stories participants share, offering deep insights into their experiences and perspectives.

5.3.12 Instrumentation

The instrumentation for this study is virtual interviews using Microsoft Teams for both online and in-person interviews. The researcher is the primary instrument in conducting interviews (Haydon et al., 2018). The

central research questions are as follows: RQ1: How are talent management practices implemented and evaluated in a HEI in Kuwait? & RQ2: What are the key influencing factors impacting talent management practices in a HEI in Kuwait?

An interview guide is created as an instrument in the study since no existing instrument addresses the research question. The interview guide includes twenty open-ended questions to facilitate the interviews. Questions in the discussion guide are only used to assist the interviewer in moving the interview forward. The interview answers the research questions, revealing the participants' narratives regarding the study phenomenon. The interview guide is only used when the researcher needs additional information.

A digital recorder is used to record the interviews as a feature through Microsoft Teams for both online and in-person interviews. The digital recorder has a built-in microphone to promote high-quality audio and suppress unwanted noise. The digital recorder helps support the ability to preserve and transcribe the interviews verbatim for data analysis.

5.3.13 Field Test

A field test determines the validity of a data collection instrument. A field test was conducted for the study to evaluate the effectiveness of the interview questions in collecting data that could assist in answering the research questions. Three qualitative experts reviewed and field-tested these interview questions to ensure clarity, conciseness, and the ability of participants to answer the questions without further explanation. The panel of experts included university faculty members who have experience and knowledge in the TM and HEI fields. These experts verified that the questions were clear and concise and met the criteria of qualitative research. The study participants were able to answer the questions without further explanation. The volunteers who participated in the field test were not included in the actual study.

The field test enhanced credibility, confirmability, and transferability and strengthened the study's rigour (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The field test ensures that the interview questions would generate valuable information.

5.3.14 Credibility and Transferability

Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are the four criteria for establishing reliability in qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). In research, credibility is the most critical component of trustworthiness (Nowell et al., 2017). Developing credibility entailed linking the research study's findings with reality to demonstrate the truth of the study's conclusions (Nowell et al., 2017). According to Curtin and Fossey (2007), findings from credible qualitative research can be applied in different settings. Anderson (2010) noted that when qualitative research is appropriately and vigorously conducted, it provides a firm foundation for the findings to be applied to other settings. The research established credibility through member checking to validate accuracy by having participants check the transcripts for accuracy (Patton, 2002).

Credibility involves establishing that the results of the research are believable (Morse, 2015). Credibility occurs when the researcher links the research study's findings with reality to demonstrate the truth of the research study's conclusions (Nowell et al., 2017). Credibility is established in this research through member checking. Credibility is obtained through an external check on the research process, testing research findings, and checking interpretations with participants (Nowell et al., 2017). According to Yin (1994), document reviews can help qualitative researchers uncover meaning, develop understanding, and provide insight into the research problem.

Transferability refers to the ability to apply findings from one study to another (Leung, 2015). Detailed descriptions and data sets are needed for other researchers to conclude the study's transferable results (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Guba and Lincoln (1994) recommend explaining the phenomenon in detail. As a part of Guba & Lincoln's (1994) study, a complete and detailed account of the experiences encountered during data collection and analysis, as well as other aspects of data collection and analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). A detailed description allows the reader to determine if the results of the study could be applied to other situations.

The concept of dependability in qualitative research resembles the reliability in quantitative analysis. Dependability in qualitative research means the researcher is accountable for content variation within the research environment. According to Tobin and Begley (2004), they are achieving the dependability required to document the research process. Dependability not only ensures that the research process can be repeated but also involves examining the research process.

To ensure dependability, the researcher analyses the data in detail and imports the data into NVivo™ version fourteen. The process of ensuring dependability in this study includes audio recording interview conversations and creating verbatim transcriptions. Tobin and Begley (2004) indicate that achieving dependability involves ensuring that the research process is documented.

Confirmability is the accuracy and neutrality of the data, which is enhanced by acknowledging bias (Houghton et al., 2013). Confirmability is the degree to which other researchers can confirm the research study's findings, and interpretations of the findings are not biased by the researcher but derived from the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). By using bracketing, the researcher can set aside presuppositions and assumptions and shield any personal biases by continuously identifying and recording assumptions about opinions and interests in that topic. This process allows the researcher to ensure that the data interpretations do not include any of the researcher's assumptions.

5.3.15 Data Collection

The data collection process begins after the approval of the Aston University Ethics Application form. The primary source of data collection was semi-structured interviews, which allowed for the emergence of stories through collaborative conversations with the researcher (Muylaert et al., 2014). All interviews are conducted using Microsoft Teams, whether an online interview or on campus, in a confined area for both

the participant and researcher. Each participant is assigned a pseudonym before the start of the discussions.

Participants in the study are assigned codes based on their position: administrators are coded as A, faculty members as F, and students as S, with numbers indicating the sequence of participation (Refer to Figure 5). To ensure confidentiality, participants are asked to use pseudonyms during the interview process. Additionally, participants are required to return the signed consent form via email before the interview commences.

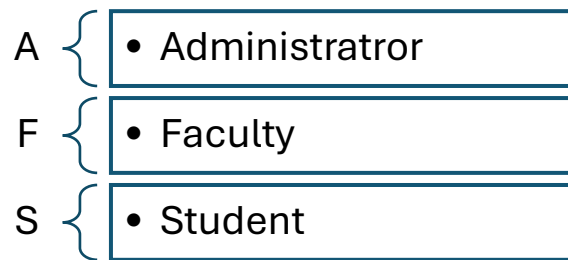


Figure 5: Pseudonyms and Code Mappings

5.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis commenced with the processed and coded transcripts using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis and NVivo™ version fourteen software. Braun and Clarke's methodology consists of six stages, as demonstrated in Figure 6 below. Detailed descriptions of each step ensure transparency and traceability in the analysis process.



Figure 6: Six Stages of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Step one of Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis consists of becoming familiar with the data. The collected data is read multiple times in its original format. The information is then transcribed and reread. Audio recordings are reviewed repeatedly and then compared to the transcripts and the audio recordings several times to develop accurate transcripts. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) mention that researchers should only move beyond this critical first step once familiar.

Step two of the framework analysis is creating initial codes. The framework allows the researcher to move through data analysis in an organised manner and provides a process for identifying attractive codes by scrutinising the data. In this study, the data is analysed through the lens of the conceptual framework to understand how the initial codes can be interpreted for the next step, which is searching for themes.

Step three of thematic analysis calls for the search for themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question. It represents some level of a patterned response or meaning within the data set. Braun and Clarke SA, Aftimos, DBA Thesis, Aston University 2024

(2006) suggest that the researcher should remain flexible and use judgment to determine relevant and essential information in the process of sorting the different codes into potential themes.

Step four consists of reviewing the themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), two reviews occurred in the fourth phase of thematic analysis. The first level involves reviewing the coded data extracts. This level of assessment is achieved by looking through the themes and determining if patterns exist. Level two involves looking at the entire completed data set from the interviews and determining if the meaning is accurately reflected by the researcher in the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Step five of the thematic process involves defining the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The goal is to define and refine the developed themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, the goal is to understand the theme and its relation to the overall research question.

Step six of Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework consists of writing the report. The final piece of the analysis provides concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and impactful insights about the data and how it ties within and across themes. Finally, this step outlines clear evidence of how the code is developed into pieces, including direct quotes.

5.4.1 Addressing Insider Researcher Bias

Insider researcher bias is a common challenge when the researcher has a direct affiliation or familiarity with the research setting, participants, or organisational culture. In this study, the researcher's role as an insider having prior exposure to University XYZ could potentially influence the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes. As an insider researcher, there is a risk of unconscious bias stemming from pre-existing knowledge, assumptions, or personal experiences that may shape the study's findings (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007). Such biases might affect objectivity, reduce reflexivity, and hinder the accurate representation of participants' perspectives.

5.4.2 Potential Risks of Insider Bias

1. Familiarity with University XYZ's environment and stakeholders could lead to assumptions being made instead of carefully exploring the data.
2. The researcher may unconsciously focus on information that confirms pre-existing beliefs while overlooking conflicting or unexpected data.
3. The researcher's dual role as both an academic and a researcher could result in difficulties distinguishing between professional obligations and research objectivity.
4. Given that the researcher has insider access, participants might provide responses they believe align with the researcher's expectations, compromising data authenticity.

5.4.3 Strategies to Mitigate Insider Researcher Bias

To address and minimise insider bias, the study employs the following strategies:

1. Reflexivity is a critical tool for mitigating insider researcher bias (Finlay, 2002). The researcher maintained a reflexive journal throughout the study to document assumptions, observations, and decisions made during data collection and analysis. By consistently reflecting on personal biases and acknowledging positionality, the researcher ensured that these factors were systematically recognised and accounted for during the research process. Reflexive journaling also provided a transparent record of how the researcher engaged with the data while minimising undue influence from pre-existing knowledge.
2. The study adhered to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis and the conceptual framework of TM. The systematic structure provided by Braun and Clarke's methodology acted as a guiding framework for coding, identifying themes, and interpreting data, ensuring that the analysis was grounded in participants' voices and responses rather than subjective assumptions.
3. Data triangulation was employed to enhance the study's credibility and reduce bias. Multiple sources of data were used, including semi-structured interviews with diverse stakeholders (administrators, faculty, and students).
4. Peer debriefing sessions were conducted with external academic colleagues who provided constructive feedback on the research process and data interpretation. These sessions helped identify potential areas of bias and ensured that the emerging themes were robust, credible, and reflective of the data. The involvement of external peers challenged the researcher to critically examine assumptions and remain objective.
5. Member checking was used as a validation tool to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations. Participants were provided with summaries of the key findings and themes to verify whether their experiences and perspectives were accurately represented. This approach strengthened the trustworthiness of the data and reduced the likelihood of researcher misinterpretation.
6. To promote transparency and rigour, the researcher maintained a comprehensive audit trail documenting every stage of the research process. This included detailed notes on data collection, coding decisions, theme development, and analytic reasoning. The audit trail provides a clear and replicable path for how findings were derived, ensuring accountability and reducing subjectivity.

5.5 Chapter Summary

Chapter Five includes the research method, design, and research questions that guided this study. The appropriateness of the design and the purposive selection of participants for this study, as well as confidentiality, are discussed. Participants are informed of their right to volunteer for this study. They must sign an informed consent form (Appendix B) after reviewing the invitation letter (Appendix C) and Participant Information Sheet (Appendix D). The researcher further addresses maintaining anonymity and

confidentiality for the participants. Participants are interviewed through one-on-one Microsoft Teams for both online and in-person interviews. A qualitative single case study is the most appropriate research method and design for this study. The data collection and data analysis processes are discussed. Chapter six discusses the research questions and instruments used to collect, analyse data, and identify themes. The methods of coding and securing data, as well as a detailed description of participants' responses, are presented in Chapter Six.

Chapter 6: The Analysis of the Qualitative Data

6.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the TM practices employed at a HEI in Kuwait, particularly at University XYZ. This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how academic talent is defined, recruited, and managed in the context of University XYZ. The study aims to explore the implementation and evaluation of TM practices, along with identifying the key factors that influence these processes, guided by the two research questions identified previously in Chapter One. The sample consisted of 25 participants from University XYZ in Kuwait, including administrators, faculty, and students. The sample size was deemed sufficient as it aligns with qualitative research methodologies, which prioritise depth of insight over breadth of data. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that participants with diverse and relevant perspectives were included, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The decision to include 25 participants was guided by the principle of data saturation, the point at which no new themes or insights emerge, which was reached during the data collection process (Lu et al., 2024). This chapter describes the data collection process, including detailed demographic data and the data analysis process. Direct quotes from the interviews are used to ensure authenticity and credibility, accurately representing the participants' voices. This chapter concludes with a summary, followed by a discussion of critical findings in Chapter Seven.

Research Questions

The following are the central research questions and four sub-research questions that guided the study:

Central Research Question

RQ1: How are talent management practices implemented and evaluated in a higher educational institution in Kuwait?

RQ2: What are the key influencing factors impacting talent management practices in a higher educational institution in Kuwait?

Sub-Research Questions

The study had four sub-research questions:

SRQ1: How do institutional vision and policies influence talent management practices in higher educational institutions?

SRQ2: What are the internal and external factors that facilitate and restrain the implementation of talent management policies and practices?

SRQ3: What processes and criteria are used to identify, develop, and retain talent within the institution, and how effective are these processes?

SRQ4: How do stakeholders within the organisation, including faculty and administrative staff, perceive and contribute to talent management practices?

6.1 Demographic Data

The purposive sampling approach was chosen to ensure that the selected participants represented key stakeholders within the institution, as guided by stakeholder theory. This theory stresses the importance of engaging diverse groups that influence or are influenced by organisational practices (Freeman, 1984; Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Administrators were included to capture insights from those shaping policies and institutional strategies. Faculty members were selected to provide perspectives on the academic and operational implementation of TM practices, while students offered critical insights as primary beneficiaries of the institution's educational services.

The focus on these groups is consistent with the literature, which highlights the importance of incorporating varied stakeholder perspectives to develop a comprehensive understanding of organisational dynamics (Freeman, 1984; Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Stakeholder theory suggests that an inclusive approach fosters better decision-making and institutional accountability (Freeman, 1984). Additionally, the choice of participants was informed by their ability to contribute to a rich and nuanced exploration of the research questions, ensuring that data saturation, a key principle in qualitative research, was achieved (Lu et al., 2024). By purposefully including administrators, faculty, and students, the study addresses the interconnectedness of these groups and their collective impact on the organisation's TM practices.

The study's demographic analysis provides an overview of the characteristics of the participants involved in the research. Understanding the demographics is essential as it lays the foundation for interpreting the data and results. The demographic analysis provides an overview of the 25 participants involved in the study, categorised into three main groups. The participants included administrators (A1 to A9), faculty members (F1 to F9), and students (S1 to S7). Each participant's role represents a different segment of the organisation's population, and their demographic data provides insights into the diversity and composition of the organisational community as shown in Table 5 below. Each group is distinct in terms of gender, nationality, and role. The first group is administrators (A1 to A9) which includes nine participants, evenly distributed by gender (5 females and 4 males). All administrators are expatriates. Their roles encompass senior leadership positions such as HoD, Coordinator, Senior Manager, Executive member, and Manager, reflecting the administrative backbone of the organisation. Table 6 below shows the demographic data of the administrators. The second group is the faculty group (F1 to F9) which comprises nine participants, including 5 males and 4 females. A majority are expatriates (6 participants), while a smaller portion are nationals (3 participants). Faculty members occupy diverse academic roles, such as Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Senior Instructor, and Instructor, showing their varied contributions to the institution. Table 7 reflects the demographic data of the faculty participants. The third group is the student group which consists of seven participants, with a balanced representation of genders (4 males and 3 females). The

majority are nationals (4 participants), while the rest are expatriates (3 participants). Their academic levels range from Level 2 to Level 4, reflecting a mix of various stages in their educational journey. Table 8 reflects the demographic data of the student participants.

Table 5: Participants and Code Assignment

Participant	Role	Participant	Role	Participant	Role
A1	Administrator	F1	Faculty	S1	Student
A2	Administrator	F2	Faculty	S2	Student
A3	Administrator	F3	Faculty	S3	Student
A4	Administrator	F4	Faculty	S4	Student
A5	Administrator	F5	Faculty	S5	Student
A6	Administrator	F6	Faculty	S6	Student
A7	Administrator	F7	Faculty	S7	Student
A8	Administrator	F8	Faculty	Total Number of Participants: 25	
A9	Administrator	F9	Faculty		

Table 6: Administrator's Category Details

Administrators				
#	Code	Gender	Nationality	Job Role
1	A1	Female	Expatriate	Head of Department
2	A2	Male	Expatriate	Coordinator
3	A3	Male	Expatriate	Head of Department
4	A4	Male	Expatriate	Head of Department
5	A5	Male	Expatriate	Head of Department
6	A6	Female	Expatriate	Senior Manager
7	A7	Male	Expatriate	Executive Member
8	A8	Female	Expatriate	Senior Coordinator
9	A9	Female	Expatriate	Manager

Table 7: Faculty Category Details

Faculty				
#	Code	Gender	Nationality	Job Role
1	F1	Male	Expatriate	Assistant Professor
2	F2	Female	Expatriate	Assistant Professor
3	F3	Female	Expatriate	Assistant Professor
4	F4	Male	Expatriate	Associate Professor
5	F5	Male	Expatriate	Senior Instructor
6	F6	Female	National	Instructor
7	F7	Male	National	Assistant Professor
8	F8	Male	National	Instructor
9	F9	Female	National	Assistant Professor

Table 8: Student Category Details

Students				
#	Code	Gender	Nationality	Level
1	S1	Male	National	3
2	S2	Female	National	2
3	S3	Female	National	3
4	S4	Male	National	3
5	S5	Male	Expatriate	2
6	S6	Female	Expatriate	4
7	S7	Male	Expatriate	4

6.2 Data Analysis

This careful approach underlines the study's commitment to capturing genuine experiences and perspectives. Utilising Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, the data undergoes a thorough coding and analysis phase. The process involves several key steps, beginning with an in-depth review of the narrative transcripts.

The analysis extends to examining individual texts for notable quotes and phrases capturing the essence of the responses. Coding serves as the foundational process for organising the data and assigning short, descriptive phrases or words to significant segments of text. This method facilitates a systematic organisation of the data, enhancing the clarity and depth of the ensuing analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the coding process was conducted in two cycles: initial (first cycle) and focused (second cycle) coding. The dual-cycle approach allows for a comprehensive categorisation of the data, from broad identification of relevant concepts to a more nuanced understanding of the themes present (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

NVivo™ version fourteen software played a pivotal role in the data analysis, offering a robust platform for classifying, sorting, and arranging the coded data. Leveraging the coding feature from NVivo™ is particularly valuable. It allows the use of participants' own words and phrases as codes, thereby preserving the authenticity of voices. A participant-centred approach to coding ensures that analysis remains grounded in the actual language and expressions used by the participants.

Through the application of NVivo™ version fourteen, initial codes are thoroughly organised into nodes, which facilitates the evaluation of data for patterns and similarities. The patterns are then organised into categories, which form the basis for identifying the five overarching themes of the study, as presented in Figure 7 below:

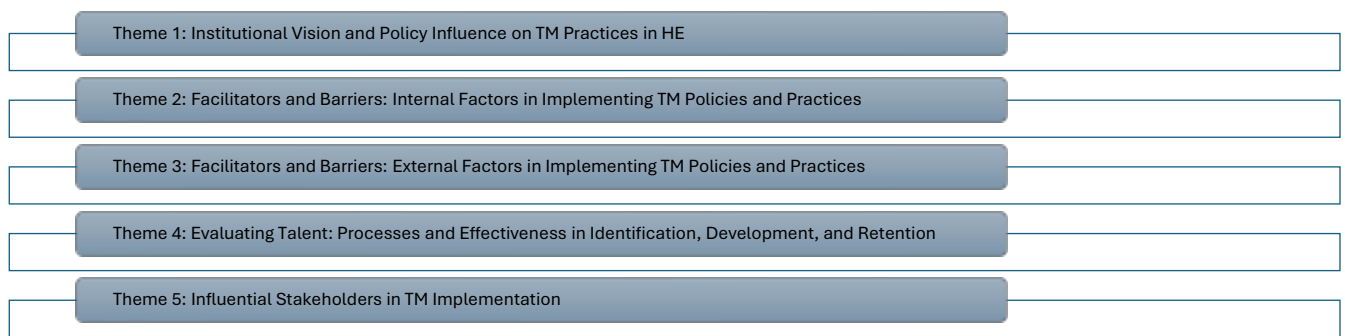


Figure 7: Study's Overarching Themes

The themes provide a comprehensive framework for answering the research questions and contribute to a well-developed, insightful conclusion about TM practices at University XYZ and Kuwait at large. As stated above, in the second level of analysis, each theme is further divided into specific subthemes detailing the numerous factors TM practices at University XYZ, as presented in section 6.3 of this chapter.

6.3 Results

This research uses thematic analysis of the findings and identifies five main themes, each with sub-themes. The themes identified within this chapter build upon the findings of the literature review outlined in chapters three and four. The key themes are considered below. It should be noted that the themes are presented in the order of the research and sub-research questions.

6.3.1 Theme 1: Institutional Vision and Policy Influence on Talent Management Practices in Higher Education

6.3.1.1 Talent Management Practices

6.3.1.1.1 *Implementation Challenges and Support*

One of the primary challenges is the absence of clear standards governing TM processes. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, reported on the importance of a strategic approach, top management commitment, alignment with organisational objectives, and ongoing evaluation for successful TM implementation, "It requires a strategic approach, commitment from top management, alignment with organisational goals, and consistent evaluation." The above administrator noted a lack of commitment and organisational goals.

6.3.1.1.2 *Learning and Development*

Three participants observed that learning and development played a crucial role in TM, ensuring that employees acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in their roles and contribute effectively to organisational success. A4, A7, and F3 each approached TM from different perspectives. A4, as a head of department, focussed on the importance of specific courses and targeted training within areas, focusing on specialised knowledge, "Individual courses in specific areas." A7, in his executive role, highlighted the SA, Aftimos, DBA Thesis, Aston University 2024

broader, organisational-level practices such as employee alignment and development, connecting these efforts to improved productivity and organisational success, “TM practices like proper employee alignment, training, and development are linked to improved productivity and better organisational outcomes.” F3, female expatriate assistant professor, stressed that TM goes beyond recruitment, requiring a hands-on approach to training and developing individuals for their roles, “In managing those talents, it is more than just finding them, you need to, of course, train them to do the job.” While A4 focused on specialised training, A7, male expatriate executive member, viewed TM from a strategic organisational standpoint, and F3 highlighted the need for continuous development in managing talent.

6.3.1.1.3 Motivation and Engagement

Seven participants noted that motivating and engaging employees is essential for maintaining a positive work environment, enhancing job satisfaction, and driving organisational success. Participant A1, a female expatriate head of department, highlights several initiatives aimed at motivating employees, including career plans, incentives for research, and measures to retain intellectual property. Additionally, efforts to promote wellbeing through events such as annual dinners and movie nights, as well as providing access to mental health counselling, contribute to employee satisfaction and retention, “there is wellbeing, annual dinners, movie nights or a counsellor for mental health. No university is an exception to this; they might leave to go to another university.”

Participant A3, a male expatriate head of department, mentioned the importance of rewarding employees for their contributions, suggesting that recognition should be tied to performance outcomes, “Should be rewarded and should be as a result of the work offered and completed.”

Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, discussed the need for organisations to provide the necessary support to ensure that talent and the workforce are engaged and perform well: “Making sure talent, workforce engagement and performance are well. What we need or are expected to do to offer the support needed.”

Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, discussed the critical role of TM in shaping organisational culture and enhancing employee engagement. Practices that recognise and develop employees' potential contribute to a positive work environment and prominent levels of job satisfaction.

Participant A9, a female expatriate manager, discussed the need to invest in employees' growth and development to build a motivated and skilled workforce. By prioritising the wellbeing and PD of employees, organisations can create a supportive environment conducive to high performance and job satisfaction, “Such practices are essential in driving a company's success prioritising the wellbeing and growth of their employees.”

Participant F5, a male expatriate senior instructor, succinctly stated that motivating employees is crucial for driving performance and productivity, emphasising the direct link between motivation and organisational success, “When employees feel valued and motivated, they become more engaged in their SA, Aftimos, DBA Thesis, Aston University 2024

work, which directly impacts both their performance and overall productivity. Without motivation, it is difficult to sustain elevated levels of commitment and efficiency in the workplace.”

Participant F6, a female national instructor, highlighted the importance of recognising and rewarding top performers as a means of motivating employees and reinforcing desired behaviours. Recognition, whether through verbal appreciation or tangible rewards, reinforces positive behaviours and creates a culture where employees feel valued and motivated to excel. “When employees see that their efforts and achievements are recognised and rewarded, it not only boosts their morale but also encourages them to maintain high performance.”

While all participants agreed on the importance of motivation in improving performance and satisfaction, their approaches differed in scope and focus. A1’s, female expatriate head of department, strategy is holistic, involving both intrinsic (well-being initiatives) and extrinsic (career plans, research incentives) factors. A3, A7, and F6, however, focus more on recognition and rewards, with A3 and F6 emphasising performance-based rewards and A7 connecting recognition to organisational culture. A6 and A9 take a broader organisational approach, with A6 focusing on support systems for engagement and performance, and A9 emphasising investment in growth and development for long-term success. F5’s perspective is more direct and performance-driven, suggesting that motivation is primarily about driving results.

In sum, all the participants share a mutual understanding of the importance of motivation, but their emphasis ranges from well-being and development to recognition and performance outcomes.

6.3.1.1.4 Recruitment and Attraction

Five participants pointed out that recruitment and attraction strategies are pivotal components of TM, crucial for sourcing and retaining top talent in an increasingly competitive global landscape. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, reported the significance of TM in navigating the challenges posed by globalisation and evolving workforce dynamics, “In a globalised world, the competition for top talent is intense. Organisations that excel in TM are better positioned to attract and retain high-calibre professionals who can drive innovation and growth.” The participants highlighted the importance of forward-thinking strategies that prioritise factors such as work-life balance, DEI, and remote working. Additionally, A7 noted the continuous need for skill development and adaptation, along with the role of technology in facilitating TM processes. Moreover, ethical considerations, such as fairness, bias mitigation, and equal opportunities, are mentioned as integral aspects of TM practices.

Participant F3, a female expatriate assistant professor, pointed out the evolving focus of HR departments, moving beyond traditional criteria such as educational background and competencies to consider a broader range of factors in candidate selection, “I speak about the HR department because it is no longer about trying to find people who are suitable to get the job done, or just trying to get people who have the right schools and the right competencies to join the workforce right now.” Her perspective as an academic

adds an additional layer of insight, as she is not only an observer of these changes but also actively engaged in shaping the next generation of professionals.”

Participant F6, a female national instructor, pointed out the importance of onboarding new hires and managing employee strengths as part of TM practices, “onboard new hires, manage employee strengths.”

Participant F8, a male national instructor, cautioned against over-emphasising talent acquisition and succession planning as isolated practices, noting that there is a need for a more holistic approach to TM: “Over-emphasis on talent acquisition and succession planning to fill vacant roles as a point-in-time practice.”

Participant F9, a female national assistant professor, advocated for a holistic focus on talent access, combining both acquisition and mobility practices to leverage talent where it adds the most value, “Holistic focus on talent access through both acquisition and mobility practices that are leveraged where they add the most value.”

The participants’ responses on recruitment and attraction strategies shaped by their professional positions. Expatriate executives, such as participant A7, approach TM from a strategic, organisational perspective, emphasising competition, innovation, and growth. Their view is shaped by a macro-level understanding of how globalisation and workforce trends dictate the need for progressive recruitment strategies, incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion, remote work, and technology-driven hiring solutions. Similarly, expatriate academics, such as participant F3, bring a unique perspective, focusing on the evolution of HR practices beyond traditional qualifications to encompass broader candidate attributes. As educators, they not only observe these changes but also contribute to preparing future professionals to meet these shifting industry demands. This aligns with participant F9’s assertion that talent access should be viewed holistically, integrating both acquisition and mobility to optimise workforce potential.

In contrast, national participants, including instructors, emphasise the operational and practical aspects of recruitment and attraction within HEIs. Participant F6 focuses on onboarding and employee management, suggesting that recruitment must extend beyond hiring to ensure long-term integration and retention. Likewise, participant F8 critiques the isolated application of talent acquisition and succession planning, advocating for a more interconnected approach. These insights collectively suggest that while expatriates approach recruitment from a strategic and transformative lens, national participants focus on the practical execution of these strategies within institutional settings.

6.3.1.1.5 Strategic Management

Three participants noted that strategic management involves the formulation and implementation of plans and initiatives to achieve organisational goals. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, discussed the role of TM, noting that talent is now viewed as a strategic asset within organisations. The participant highlighted the importance of attracting, developing, retaining, and effectively utilising talented individuals to gain a competitive edge and drive overall success. Additionally, A7, male expatriate executive

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member, stressed the necessity of planning for leadership succession and ensuring the availability of a talent pipeline to fill critical roles, further emphasising the strategic nature of TM practices, “Effective TM includes planning for leadership succession and ensuring that the organisation has a pipeline of talent ready to fill key roles.”

Participant A8, a female expatriate senior coordinator, focused on the mutual growth facilitated by strategic TM, suggesting that it involves bringing the right talents on board and fostering their development in a manner that benefits both the individual and the organisation, “Where it brings the right talents on board and helps both parties to grow effectively and efficiently.”

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, reported on the importance of aligning TM practices with organisational goals, culture, and specific strategies. By considering various perspectives and continually reviewing and improving these practices, organisations can create environments conducive to employees reaching their full potential, “Organisation's goals, culture, and the specific strategies employed. By considering the various perspectives and continuously reviewing and improving these practices, organisations can work towards creating environments where employees can reach their full potential.”

The three participants highlight different facets of strategic TM, though all agree on its importance in achieving organisational goals. A7, frames talent as a strategic asset, emphasising the need for organisations to attract, develop, retain, and effectively utilise talent to gain a competitive edge. The participant also stresses the importance of leadership succession planning and maintaining a talent pipeline for critical roles. A8 adds a mutual growth perspective, viewing strategic TM as a process that benefits both the organisation and the individual by aligning the right talents with the company's goals while fostering their development. F4 points out the need to align TM with organisational culture, goals, and strategies, arguing that organisations must continuously review and improve their TM practices to create environments where employees can reach their full potential. While A7 and A8 focus on the strategic alignment of talent within organisational goals, and F4 emphasises the adaptability of TM practices.

6.3.1.1.6 Talent Assessment

Talent assessment is a crucial aspect of TM, involving the identification, evaluation, and development of individuals' skills and capabilities within an organisation. Participant A1, a female expatriate head of department, stressed the importance of having a plan to retain talent, suggesting that talent assessment should not only focus on identifying skills but also on strategies for retaining valuable employees, “Must have a plan to retain.”

Participant A2, a male expatriate coordinator, highlighted the significance of understanding employees' skill sets and providing opportunities for growth and career advancement, “Understanding the skill sets that we have and how can we further enhance their capabilities and provide them a room to either grow or achieve their career goals.”

Participant A3, a male expatriate head of department, mentioned the identification of outstanding students as part of talent assessment, suggesting a focus on recognising and nurturing talent from an early stage, “Identify outstanding students and Individual courses in specific areas.”

Participant A5, a male expatriate head of department, emphasised the importance of ensuring that managers possess the necessary skills to lead and develop their teams effectively, “Skills. Managers should have the best.”

Participant F2, a female expatriate assistant professor, focused on understanding individual talents within a team and leveraging them to their fullest potential. This perspective highlights the importance of recognising both overt and underlying talents and working to develop them for maximum contribution to the organisation, “It is also identifying the underlying talents and working on developing it, so that you can actually have them research full potential and contribute to the organisation the best they can.”

Participant F3, a female expatriate assistant professor, discussed the challenge of retaining talented employees in the face of external opportunities, emphasising the importance of effective TM practices in retaining top performers, “So keep those people who are again talented, and it is not an easy job to do because you know as employees, you got your eyes outside at other packages of other units.”

Participant F5, a male expatriate senior instructor, mentioned practices within the institution that identify needed talent, suggesting a structured approach to talent assessment and acquisition, “Includes practices that identify the needed talent within the institution.”

Participant F6, a female national instructor, highlighted the role of TM systems in facilitating talent sourcing, assessment, and qualification: “Talent management systems make it easier to source talent, assess skills, and qualify.”

Whereas all participants agree on the importance of talent assessment, their focus differs. A1 and F3 emphasise retention, with A1 advocating for a formal retention plan and F3 focusing on the challenge of keeping talented individuals. A2 and F2 stress development, with A2 focused on providing growth opportunities and F2 highlighting the need to nurture both obvious and hidden talents. A3 and F5 focus on the identification of talent, whether early in students A3 or through structured institutional practices, as F5 notes. A5, on the other hand, concentrates on the role of managers, ensuring they are equipped to lead and develop teams effectively. Meanwhile, F6 emphasises the practical role of TM systems in supporting TM processes, a more technological angle not touched upon by others.

6.3.1.2 Talent Management Processes

6.3.1.2.1 *Agility and Adaptability*

Four participants noted that in a rapidly evolving landscape, agility and adaptability are essential traits for organisations to remain competitive and responsive to change. Participant A2, a male expatriate coordinator, reported on the need for agility amidst increasing challenges, advocating for a forward-looking

outlook that anticipates future needs rather than solely focusing on the present: “We are trying to remain agile as things get more challenging and trying to have an outlook that is for the future rather than just for the present.”

Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, highlighted the research focus within TM and university management, suggesting that agility is inherent in the organisation's approach, “Research focus, TM, with a huge university focus on research, while also focusing on getting students involved in research.”

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, pointed out that universities rely on faculty expertise to deliver high-quality education and research outputs: “Universities rely on the expertise and knowledge of their faculty members to deliver high-quality education and research outputs.”

Participant F5, a male expatriate senior instructor, described the need to handle multiple tasks within their job description, indicating the necessity for individual agility and adaptability in managing diverse responsibilities, “In University XYZ, as a faculty member, we are required to handle multiple tasks within our specified job description.”

The perspectives of participants on the theme of agility and adaptability within HEIs, particularly concerning TM. A2 emphasised agility as a proactive and forward-looking approach, with A2 advocating for anticipating future challenges in TM through diverse hiring practices. A6 noted the inherent agility in the university's focus on research and student involvement, depicting a strategic integration of adaptability into institutional priorities. Similarly, F4 and F5 focused on the operational side, with F4 highlighting the reliance on faculty expertise to ensure high-quality outputs and F5 pointing to the necessity for individual adaptability in managing varied responsibilities. While A6 and F4 framed agility as embedded within institutional processes, A2 and F5 highlighted a more dynamic, individual-centric need for flexibility in response to evolving demands, suggesting a multifaceted approach to agility across organisational and individual levels.

6.3.1.2.2 Career Development and Aspirations

The perspectives on career development and aspirations, as reported by the four participants, reflect a wide range of approaches focused on both individual growth and organisational alignment. Participant A4, a male expatriate Head of Department, discussed the role of external bodies in TD, emphasising that enhancing talent is an ongoing process. He also mentioned the involvement of faculty in initiatives such as the robotics club, highlighting how practical engagement opportunities support student development and prepare them for the future workforce, “Yes – College of Engineering – external bodies make for the talent. Enhancing talent most of the time. Faculty involved in the robotics club for students to participate. The availability of the Learning centre.”

Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, stressed the importance of continuous learning opportunities for career development. He advocated for encouraging participation in workshops, conferences, and further education, alongside facilitating internal training programs that align individual

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skills with the institution's needs, "Offering continuous learning opportunities to enhance skills and knowledge, facilitating internal training programs to align individual skills with institutional needs."

Participant F2, a female expatriate assistant professor, recognised the value of institutional initiatives aimed at faculty development. She noted that development programs are designed to help staff grow both professionally and personally, suggesting a more holistic view of career development that combines professional skills with personal growth. She said, "I do feel like they have certain initiatives, and they do have certain development programs as well that do help the staff and faculty just you know try to help in managing their talent and growing them as well as individuals."

Participant F8, a male national instructor, focused on the importance of developing skills to match the position, suggesting a more tactical approach to career development, "developing their skills to match the position."

The four participants offered diverse perspectives on career development, reflecting a balance between individual growth and organisational alignment. A4 and A7 emphasised structured, external-driven approaches: A4 focused on leveraging external bodies and hands-on opportunities like robotics clubs for skill development, while A7 advocated for continuous learning through workshops and internal training aligned with institutional goals, reflecting a strategic emphasis on aligning individual skills with organisational needs. Conversely, F2 presented a holistic view, combining professional and personal growth through faculty development programs, bridging individual aspirations with institutional culture. F8, by contrast, adopted a tactical perspective, stressing skill alignment with current roles to ensure immediate effectiveness and long-term career progression.

6.3.1.2.3 Compensation and Incentives

Three participants stated that compensation and incentives play a crucial role in TM, influencing employee motivation, engagement, and retention. Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, outlined various initiatives and structures in place related to compensation and incentives. These include clearly defined job roles and descriptions, consistent salary scales, and a reward system, "A lot of initiatives and practices are structured in place. Job roles and job descriptions set what is expected; salary scales are consistent, there is and a reward system."

Participant A9, a female expatriate manager, highlighted the significance of compensation and incentives in fostering a skilled, innovative, and motivated workforce, "This is important because no company can succeed without a skilled, innovative, and motivated workforce."

Participant F5, a male expatriate senior instructor, discussed implementing promotion policies and procedures for faculty members as part of succession planning efforts: "Promotion policy and procedures for faculty members to improve their succession plan." Additionally, the participant mentioned in-house recruitment practices and initiatives such as annual dinners and rewards for staff achievements: "Annual dinner for all staff, including faculty and administrators. Rewards are shared with both faculty members SA, Aftimos, DBA Thesis, Aston University 2024

and administrators who have achieved a particular milestone, whether a teaching excellence award or a long service award.”

The responses from the participants highlight both shared and differing perspectives on the role of compensation and incentives in TM. Expatriate managers, such as participants A6 and A9, focus on structured frameworks that ensure fairness and consistency in compensation, with A6 emphasising clear job roles, salary scales, and reward systems, while A9 links compensation directly to workforce motivation, innovation, and overall organisational success. Their viewpoints reflect a corporate, results-driven approach that prioritises financial incentives as a key driver of employee performance and retention. On the other hand, participant F5, broadens the discussion by incorporating promotion policies and in-house recruitment into the compensation framework, suggesting that career progression opportunities are just as crucial as monetary rewards. His mention of faculty-specific incentives, such as annual recognition events and long-service awards, highlights a more engagement-oriented approach, where non-monetary rewards contribute to organisational culture and long-term commitment. While all three participants acknowledge the importance of compensation and incentives, the managers focus on structured financial strategies, whereas the instructor emphasises career development and institutional culture as complementary motivators.

6.3.1.2.4 Engagement and Communication

A participant pointed out that engagement and communication are integral aspects of TM, fostering a positive work environment, enhancing employee satisfaction, and promoting organisational effectiveness. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, highlighted several critical strategies for fostering engagement and communication within the institution, “Fostering open and transparent communication within the institution.” These include promoting open and transparent communication channels, encouraging employee feedback, and involving them in decision-making processes. Additionally, the participant emphasised the importance of building a sense of community and shared purpose among staff and faculty, “Building a sense of community and shared purpose among staff and faculty.”

Participants offered distinct perspectives on engagement, communication, and career development, reflecting varying levels of focus on organisational, cultural, and individual factors. A7 prioritised institutional strategies, advocating for open communication, employee involvement in decision-making, and fostering a sense of community and shared purpose among staff and faculty.

6.3.1.2.5 Management and Support

Four participants reported that management and support were important components of TM, encompassing strategies, policies, and procedures designed to attract, develop, and retain talent within organisations. Participant A1, a female expatriate head of department, highlighted the importance of a specialised strategy pillar for TM, emphasising the need for strategic planning to manage talent within the

organisation effectively. The participants also emphasised the significance of retention strategies and the importance of clarity in retaining talent, “How to retain.”

Participant A5, a male expatriate head of department, discussed TM in terms of addressing challenges and solving problems related to roles and responsibilities. The participant emphasised the dynamic nature of TM, requiring daily optimisation and solutions tailored to individual needs and circumstances: “TM, how to deal with challenges with roles, solving problems, optimised on a daily basis, semester, and academic year. TM absolutely exists in the individual nature of people.”

Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, mentioned the importance of policies and procedures in TM, suggesting the need for structured frameworks to guide talent-related initiatives, “Policies and procedures.”

Participant F7, a male national assistant professor, focused on TM within the academic functions of the university, explicitly teaching and research, “focuses on the academic functions of the university (i.e., teaching and research) and so concentrates on talent management of academic staff.”

The participants highlighted different facets of TM, reflecting strategic, operational, structural, and academic perspectives. A1 emphasised the importance of a strategic pillar for TM, focusing on retention strategies and clarity in managing talent effectively. A5, by contrast, described TM as a dynamic and problem-solving process, requiring daily optimisation and adaptability to individual circumstances, highlighting the fluid and responsive nature of TM. A6 approached TM from a structural angle, underscoring the role of policies and procedures in creating a consistent framework for talent-related initiatives. Meanwhile, F7 narrowed the focus to the academic domain, emphasising TM in teaching and research to enhance the development of academic staff.

6.3.1.2.6 *Open to change*

A participant noted openness to change as an essential aspect of TM as it enables organisations to adapt to evolving needs and opportunities, fostering innovation, growth, and employee development. Participant F2, a female expatriate assistant professor, expressed a nuanced perspective on openness to change within TM. The participant acknowledged that while organisations may excel at identifying individuals based on their backgrounds and placing them in suitable positions, there can be missed opportunities to recognise strengths in alternative areas: “They are typically good at identifying people based on their backgrounds and placing them in the right positions.” F2 highlighted the importance of providing opportunities for employees to develop in diverse areas and the need for staff to be knowledgeable about available programmes and opportunities.

The participant offered complementary yet distinct views on openness to change within TM. F2 provided a detailed perspective, highlighting both the organisation’s strength in aligning individuals with roles based on their backgrounds and the missed opportunities to leverage employee strengths in alternative areas.

She emphasised the importance of creating diverse developmental opportunities and increasing staff awareness of available programmes to foster a more dynamic approach to TM.

6.3.1.2.7 Performance and Competitiveness

Two participants identified performance and competitiveness as essential components of TM, contributing to organisational success and sustainability. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, highlighted several critical strategies for promoting performance and competitiveness within the organisation. These include regularly assessing employee performance through reviews and evaluations, setting clear goals aligned with institutional objectives, and providing feedback and support to enhance performance. “Regularly assessing the performance of employees through reviews, evaluations.”

Participant F6, a female national instructor identified vital positions that contribute differentially to the organisation's competitive advantage, “Identifies key positions that differentially contribute to the organisation's competitive advantage.”

6.3.1.2.8 Talent Acquisition and Recruitment

Five participants noted that talent acquisition and recruitment strategies are pivotal in attracting and retaining top talent within organisations. Participant A2, a male expatriate coordinator, highlighted ongoing efforts to improve the recruitment and selection process to ensure transparency and find the right talent, “they are trying to improve the recruitment and selection process in order to ensure that we do find the right talent and are more transparent.”

Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, outlined several critical strategies for effective talent acquisition, including identifying specific skills needed in various roles, using diverse and inclusive recruitment strategies, implementing efficient selection processes, facilitating a smooth onboarding experience for new hires, “Providing necessary training and resources for new employees to understand their responsibilities and the institution's values and goals.”

Participant F6, a female national instructor, discussed the development of a talent pool consisting of high-potential or high-performing individuals to fill key positions: “Develops a talent pool of high potential and/or high-performing individuals to fill these positions and develops human resource systems to facilitate the alignment of talented individuals, key positions, and organisational strategy.”

Participant F8, a male national instructor, emphasised the importance of TM in identifying vacant positions, hiring suitable candidates, and retaining them to achieve long-term organisational goals: “The talent management process in an organisation is about identifying vacant positions and hiring suitable candidates.”

Participant F9, a female national assistant professor, highlighted the comprehensive nature of the TM process, which encompasses sourcing, selecting, and retaining the most suitable individuals for the organisation: “The talent management process encompasses a comprehensive approach to sourcing, selecting, and retaining the most suitable individuals for an organisation.”

The participants offered varied perspectives on TM, particularly in recruitment, selection, and retention processes. A2 focused on enhancing the transparency and effectiveness of recruitment to secure the right talent, reflecting an ongoing improvement approach. A7 extended this perspective by outlining comprehensive strategies, including skill identification, inclusive recruitment, efficient selection processes, and onboarding practices to align new hires with institutional goals. F6 introduced the concept of developing a high-potential talent pool, stressing the alignment of key roles with organisational strategy. F8 highlighted the practical aspects of TM, stressing the identification of vacancies, hiring suitable candidates, and ensuring their retention to achieve long-term goals. F9 provided a holistic view, describing TM as a comprehensive process encompassing sourcing, selecting, and retaining individuals. While A2 and A7 concentrated on refining recruitment and onboarding practices, F6 and F8 focused on strategic alignment and retention, and F9 captured the overall scope of TM, bridging both strategic and operational facets.

6.3.2 Theme 2: Facilitators and Barriers: Internal Factors in Implementing Talent Management Policies and Practices

6.3.2.1 Internal factors facilitating TM policy implementation.

6.3.2.1.1 *Clear HR policies*

Six participants' responses highlight the role of clear HR policies and systems in TM. Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, highlighted the presence of clear Terms of Reference (ToR) for each job title as an internal factor facilitating TM policy implementation, "Clear ToR for each job title."

Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, emphasised the importance of a skilled and competent HR department in facilitating TM policy implementation. They pointed out the critical role of HR professionals in various aspects of TM, including recruitment, training and development, PM, and succession planning, "A skilled and competent HR department is critical for designing and implementing effective TM programmes. This includes expertise in areas such as recruitment, training and development, PM, and succession planning."

Participant A8, a female expatriate senior coordinator, discussed the value of developing a better understanding of staff roles and talents through employee relations, "developing a better understanding of the staff roles/talents (employee relations)."

Participant A9, a female expatriate manager, stressed the importance of clear organisational goals and objectives, "Clear organisational goals and objectives." Clear and transparent goals serve as a guide for the implementation of TM policies, as they help to ensure that TM initiatives are aligned with the strategic direction of the organisation.

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, emphasised the need for robust HR systems and processes, which are essential for managing the flow of talent within the organisation, "robust HR systems and processes, organisation."

Finally, Participant F5, a male expatriate senior instructor, echoed the need for clear HR policies and procedures. This emphasis on clarity suggests that clear, well-documented policies are fundamental to the smooth implementation of TM practices, “Clear HR policies and procedures.”

6.3.2.1.2 Compensation and Incentives

Five participants shared various opinions on compensation and incentives as facilitators of TM implementation. Participant A2, a male expatriate coordinator, mentioned offering competitive compensation and having policies and procedures to support fair working environments and opportunities to study abroad. He said, “We do look at offering competitive compensations as well as awaiting policies and procedures to support them to have a fair working environment as well as opportunities to study abroad.”

Participant A4, a male expatriate head of department, referred to incentives for both faculty and students as internal factors facilitating TM policy implementation, “incentives for faculty and students.”

Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, highlighted the role of budget allocation in facilitating TM policy implementation, particularly in areas such as salary, promotion, and PD conferences, “Budget. Salary, promotion, and PD conferences.”

Participant A8, a female expatriate senior coordinator, mentioned competitive advantages as an internal factor facilitating TM policy implementation, “Competitive advantages.”

Participant F3, a female expatriate assistant professor, emphasised the importance of encouraging TM, creativity, and diversity as internal factors facilitating TM policy implementation, “encouraging, you know, talent management, encouraging creativity, encouraging diversity.”

The participants offered diverse perspectives on aspects of compensation, incentives, and PD within TM. A2 highlighted competitive compensation, policies, and study abroad opportunities as tools to create a fair and growth-oriented working environment. A4 focused on offering incentives to both faculty and students, suggesting a balanced approach to motivating multiple stakeholders. A6 expanded the discussion by highlighting the role of budget allocation in supporting salary structures, promotions, and PD through conferences. A8 underscored the importance of maintaining competitive advantages, implying the need for institutions to remain attractive in a competitive market. F3 shifted the focus slightly, advocating for TM practices that foster creativity, diversity, and an encouraging environment. While A2, A6, and A8 concentrated on structural and financial aspects, A4 and F3 highlighted motivational and cultural elements, collectively revealing a holistic view of how TM practices can enhance institutional effectiveness and employee satisfaction.

6.3.2.1.3 Effective Communication

Two participants identified effective communication as another key facilitator of TM implementation. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, emphasised the importance of clear and transparent communication channels in facilitating TM policy implementation. They highlighted that such

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communication helps disseminate the goals and benefits of TM strategies to all stakeholders, ensuring alignment and understanding across the organisation, “Clear and transparent communication channels help in disseminating the goals and benefits of TM strategies to all stakeholders. This includes regular updates and open dialogue about talent management policies and practices.”

Participant F3, a female expatriate assistant professor, also stressed the significance of open communication in facilitating TM policy implementation. They highlighted the importance of creating an environment where individuals feel comfortable speaking up and contributing ideas, “Being in an open communication place where people you know feel that they can speak up.”

The two participants identified effective communication as essential to the successful implementation of TM policies, but their perspectives highlighted different facets of this facilitator. A7 emphasised the organisational benefits of clear and transparent communication channels, particularly in disseminating TM goals and strategies to stakeholders. Their focus was on achieving alignment and understanding across the institution through regular updates and open dialogue. In contrast, F3 highlighted the interpersonal and cultural aspects of communication, stressing the need for an environment where individuals feel empowered to speak up and share ideas.

6.3.2.1.4 Leadership Support

Three participants identified leadership support as another facilitator. Participant A2, a male expatriate coordinator, emphasised the necessity of leadership support for effective TM policy implementation. He talked about the importance of ensuring that senior management understands the objectives and benefits of TM practices and supports their implementation. He said, “Before TM, we need to get the higher management to be aware of what we are doing, why we are doing it, and then getting there, they're backing basically in terms of adopting some of these practices in terms of uh, enticing the staff members to stay or board.”

Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, echoed the significance of solid backing from top management in facilitating TM policy implementation. They mentioned the university president, deans, and head of departments as essential figures whose commitment to TM sets the tone and direction for the entire organisation, “Strong backing from top management, including the university president, deans, and head of departments, is essential. Their commitment to TM as a strategic priority sets the tone and direction for the entire organisation.”

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, also emphasised the importance of leadership support, albeit concisely. They mentioned "leadership support," suggesting that support from leadership figures is a critical internal factor for facilitating TM policy implementation.

All the participants identified leadership support as a critical facilitator of TM policy implementation, but their perspectives vary in depth and emphasis. A2 highlighted the importance of ensuring that senior management understands the goals and benefits of TM, stressing the need for leadership backing to adopt

and implement TM practices effectively. A7 expanded on this by naming specific leadership roles, such as the university president, deans, and heads of department, and emphasised that their commitment to TM as a strategic priority is crucial for setting the direction and tone across the organisation. F4, on the other hand, offered a more succinct view, simply noting that leadership support is a critical internal factor for TM implementation.

6.3.2.1.5 Organisational Culture and Structure

Four participants discussed organisational culture and structure as a facilitator of TM policy implementation. Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, referred to the organisational structure as a crucial internal factor facilitating TM policy implementation. They mentioned having a less vertical structure, suggesting that a flatter hierarchy could contribute to smoother implementation by promoting collaboration, communication, and agility within the organisation: “Organisational structure. Less vertical.”

Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, emphasised the importance of organisational culture in fostering an environment conducive to TM initiatives. They highlighted that a culture valuing learning, development, diversity, and employee engagement creates a positive atmosphere that supports and reinforces TM goals, “A culture that values learning, development, diversity, and employee engagement creates a positive environment for talent management initiatives. Such a culture supports and reinforces the goals of talent management.”

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, and participant F5, a male expatriate senior instructor, talked about organisational culture alignment, managerial style, and culture without explaining further how they affected TM policies implementation.

All the participants discussed the role of organisational culture and structure as facilitators of TM policy implementation, but their views varied. A6 highlighted the importance of a flatter, less vertical organisational structure, suggesting that such a structure promotes collaboration, communication, and agility, which are essential for smooth TM implementation. A7, on the other hand, emphasised the broader role of organisational culture, particularly a culture that values learning, development, diversity, and employee engagement, as a key factor in creating an environment conducive to TM. F4, F5, and S6 mentioned organisational culture, managerial style, and culture alignment, but did not elaborate on how these elements specifically facilitated TM policy implementation, leaving their contributions more general and less detailed compared to A6 and A7.

6.3.2.1.6 Performance Management Systems

Two participants highlighted PM systems as a facilitator. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, emphasised the importance of robust PM systems in facilitating TM policy implementation. They highlighted that such systems, when fair, transparent and aligned with organisational goals, can drive effective TM. By identifying, rewarding, and developing talent, these systems contribute to the overall

success of TM initiatives within the organisation, “Robust PM systems that are fair, transparent, and aligned with organisational goals can drive effective TM. These systems help in identifying, rewarding, and developing talent.”

Participant F2, a female expatriate assistant professor, discussed the role of PM systems in TM policy implementation. They mentioned evaluating performance throughout the semester and conducting in-class observations as part of the PM process, “Our performance throughout the semester, in-class observations, and things that they do that kind of help.”

Both participants discussed PM in the context of TM, but their perspectives differed in scope and focus. A7, as an executive member, emphasised the importance of robust PM systems that are fair, transparent, and aligned with organisational goals, highlighting their role in identifying, rewarding, and developing talent. In contrast, F2, as an assistant professor, focused on performance at the individual level, particularly regarding classroom performance and observations throughout the semester.

6.3.2.1.7 Resource allocation

Four participants pointed out resource allocation as a facilitator to TM policies implementation. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, highlighted the significance of adequate resource allocation, including budget, personnel, and technology, for successful TM policy implementation. They stressed that investments in these areas demonstrate the organisation's commitment to its talent and contribute to the overall success of TM initiatives, “Adequate allocation of resources, including budget, personnel, and technology, is necessary for the successful implementation of talent management initiatives. Investments in these areas demonstrate the organisation's commitment to its talent.”

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, also mentioned resource allocation as a crucial factor in TM policy implementation. Participant A1, a female expatriate head of department and participant A4, a male expatriate head of department, only mentioned financial budgets and financial support without indicating their effect on TM policies implementation.

The four participants highlighted resource allocation as a key facilitator of TM policy implementation, but with varied perspectives. A7 provided a comprehensive view, emphasising the need for adequate resources, including budget, personnel, and technology, to ensure successful TM initiatives. He stressed that investing in these areas shows the organisation's commitment to its talent and helps drive the overall success of TM policies. F4 also recognised resource allocation as a crucial factor but did not elaborate on specific resources, offering a more general endorsement. In contrast, A1 and A4, both expatriate heads of department, mentioned financial budgets and support, yet did not clarify how these resources directly influence the implementation of TM policies.

6.3.2.1.8 Training and development

According to two participants, training and development played a role in TM policies implementation. Participant A2, a male expatriate coordinator, highlighted the challenges associated with training and

development initiatives, noting that they are neither cheap nor easy to adopt in the region. “In terms of obviously training and development, it's not cheap, and it's not easy to adopt this in this region.”

Participant A9, a female expatriate manager, emphasised the importance of fostering a culture of learning and development within the organisation.

The two participants discussed the role of training and development in TM policy implementation, but with different perspectives. A2 acknowledged the challenges of implementing training and development initiatives, particularly highlighting the financial and logistical difficulties in adopting such programs in the region. A9 took a more positive stance, emphasising the importance of fostering a culture of learning and development within the organisation, which is essential for supporting TM policies and encouraging employee growth.

6.3.2.2 Internal factors restraining TM policy implementation.

6.3.2.2.1 *Cultural Barriers*

Two participants reported that cultural barriers affected TM policy implementation. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, described the detrimental effect of an organisational culture that does not prioritise TD, diversity, or employee engagement: “An organisational culture that does not value or prioritise TD, diversity, or employee engagement can negatively impact talent management efforts.” Participant A8, a female expatriate senior coordinator, also acknowledged cultural factors as a restraining factor.

Both A7 and A8 identified cultural barriers as key factors that can hinder the successful implementation of TM policies. A7 pointed out the detrimental effect of an organisational culture that fails to prioritise TD, diversity, or employee engagement, emphasising that such a culture can undermine TM efforts. Similarly, A8 acknowledged cultural factors as a restraining element in TM policy implementation, though without elaborating in as much detail.

6.3.2.2.2 *Inadequate Compensation*

Two participants discussed inadequate compensation as an impediment to TM policy implementation. Participant A1, a female expatriate head of department, emphasised the importance of monetary compensation in TM, “Monetary job satisfaction.” Participant A8, a female expatriate senior coordinator, talked about compensation, specifically mentioning salary benefits, “Salary benefits.”

Both participants recognised inadequate compensation as an obstacle to effective TM policy implementation, although they highlighted various aspects of compensation. Participant A1 emphasised the broader concept of “monetary job satisfaction,” suggesting that compensation plays a crucial role in ensuring employees' satisfaction and motivation, which in turn influences their engagement and alignment with TM initiatives. A8, on the other hand, focused more specifically on “salary benefits,” which directly ties to financial compensation and suggests that the lack of competitive salary offerings could hinder TM policy implementation.

6.3.2.2.3 *Lack of Development*

Two participants noted a lack of development opportunities. Participant A1, a female expatriate head of department, mentioned job satisfaction because of inadequate development opportunities. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, also addressed this issue, pointing out that insufficient opportunities for training, development, and career progression can demotivate administrators and faculty, impacting retention and succession planning, “Insufficient opportunities for training, development, and career progression can demotivate staff and faculty, impacting retention and succession planning.”

Both participants highlighted the issue of inadequate development opportunities, but their perspectives were different. Participant A1 talked about a link between development opportunities and job satisfaction. Participants suggested that the lack of professional growth directly affected employees in their roles. On the other hand, participant A7, provided a broader organisational perspective, emphasising how insufficient training, development, and career progression opportunities could lead to demotivation, retention issues, and succession planning challenges. This response shows a connection between individual dissatisfaction and institutional consequences, suggesting that the lack of development opportunities has long-term implications for staffing and leadership continuity.

6.3.2.2.4 *Limited Resources*

Ten participants complained about limited resources in TM policy implementation. Participant A2, a male expatriate coordinator, pointed out budgetary constraints as a significant factor limiting the implementation of TM policies, “Budgetary constraints or if we do not have the money available to provide training or in order to incentivise the PM by giving bonuses and that can be handled.” Participant A4, a male expatriate head of department, highlighted a lack of time as a constraint, “Not enough time.” Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, emphasised the importance of a higher budget to overcome resource limitations. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, echoed the sentiment about resource limitations, mentioning insufficient budget allocation, inadequate staffing, and lack of necessary tools and technology as constraints, “Insufficient budget allocation, inadequate staffing, or lack of necessary tools and technology can limit the ability to execute talent management initiatives effectively.” Participant A4, a male expatriate head of department, talked about lack of enough time as a resource. Participant F2, a female expatriate assistant professor, stated that budgeting was a big challenge to TM policy implantation. Participant F5, a male expatriate senior instructor, participant F6, a female national instructor, participant F7, a male national assistant professor, participant F8, a male national instructor, and participant F9, a female national assistant professor all said budget without giving more details.

6.3.2.2.5 *Poor communication*

Two participants identified poor communication as a barrier. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, highlighted the detrimental effects of poor communication regarding TM policies and practices. This lack of effective communication could lead to misunderstandings and reduced participation among

administrators and faculty, hindering the successful implementation of TM initiatives. “Poor communication about talent management policies and practices can result in misunderstandings, lack of awareness, and reduced participation among faculty and staff.” Participant A9, a female expatriate manager, also mentioned the impact of a lack of communication on TM, “Lack of communication.”

The key contrast between their perspectives lies in the level of detail provided; A7 offers a more comprehensive explanation, outlining specific consequences of poor communication, whereas A9's mention remains general. Both participants agreed, however, that communication is crucial for fostering understanding and engagement in TM practices.

6.3.2.2.6 Poor Employee Engagement and Morale

Two participants talked about limited employee engagement. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, emphasised the importance of employee engagement and morale for the effectiveness of TM initiatives. Low levels of engagement and morale can lead to decreased participation and higher turnover rates, ultimately hindering the successful implementation of TM policies. “Low levels of employee engagement and morale can reduce the effectiveness of talent management initiatives and lead to higher turnover rates.” Participant F3, a female expatriate assistant professor, provided insight into how poor employee engagement affects TM. They highlighted that when employees feel disconnected from their work and do not feel a sense of belonging to the institution, they are less likely to contribute positively, which can impede TM efforts, “So when you feel that you are actually coming to the job just for the sake of going to the job, like you are not really connected.”

6.3.2.2.7 Poor HR Practices and Support

Three participants identified poor HR practices and support as a barrier to the implementation of TM policies. Participant A3, a male expatriate head of department, discussed the limitations imposed by poor HR practices and support. They mentioned how, as a manager, they may have limited authority over specific processes, which could hinder the implementation of TM policies effectively, “Let us say there is a specific plan that's under our control, so we cannot control all the processes.”

Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, also mentioned the significance of commitment and support from top management for effective TM. Inconsistencies in HR practices across different departments can create disparities and inefficiencies in TM, further hindering policy implementation. “Inconsistencies in HR practices across different departments or units can create disparities and inefficiencies in managing talent.” Participant F5, a male expatriate senior instructor, noted that team members not supporting the university's vision can hinder TM efforts. “Team members not abiding by or supporting University XYZ's vision.”

While all three participants agreed that support and alignment are essential for successful TM, their views were divergent. A3 highlighted the challenge of limited authority over certain processes, which restricts the ability to implement TM policies effectively, stating that not all processes fall under his control. A7

expanded on the idea by discussing the impact of inconsistent HR practices across departments, which can lead to inefficiencies and disparities in talent management. This inconsistency creates a barrier to implementing TM policies in a uniform manner across the organisation. F5 also pointed to a lack of support from team members, specifically when they do not align with the university's vision, as a barrier to effective TM.

6.3.2.2.8 *Resistance to change*

Three participants noted that there was resistance to change. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, pointed out that resistance from faculty, administrators, or management to new policies or changes in existing practices can obstruct the adoption of new talent management strategies.

Participant A9, a female expatriate manager, also mentioned resistance to change in some departments, indicating that internal resistance can pose a challenge to implementing new TM initiatives effectively, “Resistance to change in some departments.”

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, highlighted resistance to change as a factor restraining TM policy implementation.

The participants provided a different angle on the issue of resistance to change. A7 emphasised that resistance from faculty, administrators, or management can hinder the adoption of new policies or changes to existing practices, obstructing the implementation of talent management strategies. A9 also acknowledged resistance to change, specifically within certain departments, highlighting how internal resistance at the departmental level can create challenges in introducing new TM initiatives. F4 echoed the concern, noting that resistance to change broadly impedes the implementation of TM policies.

6.3.2.2.9 *Unfavourable Work Environment*

Three participants talked about unfavourable work environment. Participant A1, a female expatriate head of department, mentioned the impact of an unfavourable work environment on TM. Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, discussed how simultaneous administrative and faculty work can affect the work environment, implying that such conditions may hinder TM policy implementation, “Work done simultaneously with admins and faculty.” Participant A8 also highlighted work environment factors as a consideration for TM, suggesting that an unfavourable work environment can impede the successful implementation of talent management policies, “Working environment factors.”

The three participants acknowledged the impact of an unfavourable work environment on TM but focused on distinct aspects. Participant A1 linked poor workplace conditions to TM. She stated that an unfavourable environment negatively affected TM effort. Participant A6 concentrated on the challenge of balancing administrative and faculty responsibilities. She indicated that a heavy workload could create an unfavourable work environment and hinder TM policy implementation. On the other hand, Participant A8

viewed work environment factors as essential considerations for TM. However, she did not provide any particular details about it.

6.3.3 Theme 3: Facilitators and Barriers: External Factors in Implementing Talent Management Policies and Practices

6.3.3.1 External Factors Facilitating TM Policies and Practices

6.3.3.1.1 Compensation

Two participants reported that compensation plays a significant role in shaping TM policies and practices. Participant A2, a male expatriate coordinator, highlighted the challenge of providing competitive compensation packages. The participant acknowledged that other institutions may offer more attractive compensation packages, which can pose a challenge in talent acquisition and retention, “there is a challenge also in terms of providing competitive compensation packages...Other institutions are offering more competitive packages and providing a more modern work environment.”

Participant F5, a male expatriate senior instructor, emphasised how compensation offered by other universities affects the salaries of employees within their institution, “Other universities affect the salary of employees and the job duties.”

The two participants focused on various aspects of how compensation affects TM. A2 noted the challenge of offering competitive compensation packages, especially when other institutions provide offers that are more attractive. F5 emphasised how compensation offered by competing universities directly influences the salaries of employees within their institution, suggesting that external salary offerings can create internal disparities. A2 and F5 focussed more on external competition and its impact on retention.

6.3.3.1.2 Competition

Five participants identified competition as a key factor influencing TM policy implementation. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, highlighted the intense competition for top talent among HEIs, emphasising the need for innovative and attractive TM practices, “Competition for top talent among higher educational institutions necessitates innovative and attractive talent management practices.”

Participant F1, a male expatriate assistant professor, and participant F5, a male expatriate senior instructor, both mentioned competition, indicating its pervasive influence on TM practices within their respective institutions: “Competition.”

Participant A7 emphasised the need for innovative and attractive TM practices in the face of intense competition for top talent. F1 and F5, though briefly, also referenced competition as a significant factor affecting TM practices within their respective institutions. F6 pointed out the importance of understanding the competitive landscape, while F9 echoed this sentiment, stressing the necessity of aligning TM practices with market realities to maintain a competitive edge. While F6 and F9 focused on the broader

concept of the competitive landscape, A7 emphasised the need for proactive and innovative approaches to stand out amidst competition.

6.3.3.1.3 *Cultural and Societal Values*

Six participants noted that cultural and societal values play a significant role in shaping TM strategies within organisations. Participant A2, a male expatriate coordinator, discussed how the organisation is adjusting and aligning the working space to accommodate cultural and societal values. By introducing new buildings and creating study zones where employees can feel relaxed and comfortable, the organisation fosters an environment conducive to collaboration and innovation. He said, “As you know, trying to adjust and align the working space by introducing two new buildings as well as making more place and especially to our clients, we are offering you know study zones where they can feel relaxed and comfortable and talk to one another and come up with ideas.”

Participant A5, a male expatriate head of department, emphasised the substantial impact of culture on TM, “Culture has a huge impact.”

Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, highlighted the influence of societal values, particularly regarding education, diversity, and inclusivity, on TM policies, “Societal values regarding education, diversity, and inclusivity can shape the institution's TM policies.” Societies that prioritise continuous learning and innovation are more likely to support efforts in PD and talent cultivation, contributing to a dynamic and skilled workforce, “A society that values continuous learning and innovation will support efforts in professional development and talent cultivation.”

Participant A9, a female expatriate manager, discussed the importance of workplace diversity, reflecting a societal value of inclusivity and equality, “Diversity of workplace.”

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, emphasised the role of organisational culture in facilitating TM practices. When organisational culture values and prioritises TM, it becomes easier to obtain the necessary resources, commitment, and participation from all stakeholders, enhancing the effectiveness of TM initiatives, “When the overall culture of the organisation supports talent management, it becomes easier to obtain the necessary resources, commitment, and participation from all stakeholders.”

Participants from higher levels emphasised organisational culture and societal values as shaping factors. A2 highlighted the organisation's efforts to adjust its physical space to align with cultural and societal values, such as creating comfortable study zones to foster collaboration and innovation. A5 succinctly noted the substantial impact of culture on TM. A7 emphasised the influence of societal values, especially in education, diversity, and inclusivity, on TM policies, suggesting that societies that prioritise continuous learning and innovation support PD and talent cultivation. A9 further reflected on the importance of workplace diversity, aligning with societal values of inclusivity and equality. F4 noted that organisational

culture plays a vital role in facilitating TM practices, with a supportive culture easing the acquisition of necessary resources and participation from stakeholders.

6.3.3.1.4 Global Workforce Trends

Five participants noted that global workforce trends will have a profound impact on TM practices, shaping recruitment strategies, skill development initiatives, and organisational culture. Participant F3, a female expatriate assistant professor, highlighted the importance of embracing global talent and diversity in TM practices, “Encourages all of the stuff related to talents, bringing people from outside probably, you know, not just restricting it to locals, you know, because this comes under talents as well.” By encouraging the recruitment of individuals from diverse backgrounds, organisations can enhance creativity, innovation, and exposure to different perspectives.

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, discussed the critical role of skilled HR professionals in navigating global workforce trends. Skilled HR professionals are essential in developing and implementing effective TM strategies that align with global workforce trends, “Skilled HR professionals.”

Participant F6, a female national instructor, highlighted the impact of changes in the market on global workforce trends, “Changes in the market.”

The participants with professional roles talked about the importance of diversity, skilled HR professionals, and adapting to market changes. F3 emphasised the importance of embracing global talent and diversity in TM practices, encouraging the recruitment of individuals from diverse backgrounds to foster creativity and innovation. F4 highlighted the critical role of skilled HR professionals in navigating these trends, noting their essential role in developing strategies that align with global workforce demands. F6 focused on how market changes impact global workforce trends, signalling the dynamic nature of the global labour market.

6.3.3.1.5 Market Dynamics

Two participants discussed market dynamics that encompass various economic factors, global trends, and industry shifts that influence TM practices within organisations. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, highlighted the significance of global networks and collaborations in talent acquisition and development. Leveraging global networks offers opportunities for attracting international talent and providing administrators and faculty with valuable global experiences. “Global networks and collaborations offer opportunities for attracting international talent and for staff and faculty to gain global experiences.” Exposure to diverse educational systems and practices enriches the institution's TM strategies, fostering innovation and cross-cultural collaboration.

Participant A9, a female expatriate manager, reported on the importance of economic stability in TM practices. Economic stability influences factors such as hiring budgets, compensation packages, and investment in employee development initiatives, or “Economic stability.”

The professionals focussed on the role of global networks and economic stability in shaping TM practices, A7 emphasised the importance of global networks and collaborations in talent acquisition and

development, noting that these networks help attract international talent and provide valuable global experiences for staff and faculty, enhancing TM strategies through cross-cultural collaboration. A9, on the other hand, focused on the influence of economic stability, stressing how it affects hiring budgets, compensation packages, and investments in employee development.

6.3.3.1.6 Regulatory Framework

Seven participants discussed how regulatory frameworks, including government policies, legislation, and institutional guidelines, significantly influence TM practices within organisations. Participant A1, a female expatriate head of department, mentioned the need for approval for curriculum and capital, indicating regulatory requirements that impact TM practices in educational institutions, “Approval needed for curriculum capital.”

Participant A5, a male expatriate head of department, referenced restrictions on micro majors, suggesting regulatory constraints that affect TM practices related to curriculum development and academic offerings, “Restriction micro majors.”

Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, highlighted the importance of supportive government policies, grants, and funding in facilitating TM initiatives within educational institutions, “Supportive government policies, grants, and funding in education can facilitate the implementation of TM initiatives.” Favourable regulatory environments can provide resources and incentives for TD and retention efforts, enhancing the institution's ability to attract and retain top talent, “Regulatory frameworks can also guide institutions in adopting equitable and fair talent management practices.”

Participant F1, a male expatriate assistant professor, mentioned "Kuwaitisation," which refers to government policies aimed at increasing the employment of Kuwaiti nationals. Such policies can impact TM practices by influencing recruitment, training, and succession planning strategies within organisations operating in Kuwait, “Kuwaitisation.”

Participant F5, a male expatriate senior instructor, noted the influence of government policies and PUC regulations on TM practices, “Government policies and PUC regulations.”

Participant F6, a female national instructor, discussed how the institution's vision and the influence of regulatory bodies like the PUC affect TM practices, “University XYZ’s vision controls many talent management practices. It somewhat limits the institution’s HR potential, as the PUC has a powerful say.”

While participants such as A7 and F1 highlighted how government policies and grants can facilitate TM, others such as A1, A5, and F6 noted the constraints and restrictions imposed by regulatory frameworks, showing a contrast between the enabling and limiting effects of regulatory environments on TM practices.

6.3.3.1.7 Resource Management and Allocation

Two participants identified resource management and allocation as crucial aspects of TM practices, influencing an organisation's ability to attract, develop, and retain talent effectively. Participant A4, a male

expatriate head of department, emphasised the importance of financial resources in TM, “Financial – free of charge enhancing talent.”

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, discussed the necessity of sufficient resources, including budget allocations, for effective TM. Without adequate resources, organisations may face challenges in designing, executing, and monitoring TM activities. Budget allocations for talent acquisition, training, career development, and employee engagement initiatives are essential for nurturing a skilled and engaged workforce, “Without proper resources, it may be challenging to design, execute, and monitor talent management activities effectively.”

Despite participant A4 and participant F4 highlighting the significance of resource management and allocation in TM, their approaches differed. Participant A4 focused on the role of financial resources, suggesting that cost-free initiatives can improve TD. In addition, participant F4 discussed the importance of adequate resources, including budget allocations, for successfully designing, implementing, and monitoring TM activities. F4 discussed how inadequate funding can hinder critical TM functions such as talent acquisition, training, career development, and employee engagement.

6.3.3.1.8 *Technological Advancements*

Five participants stated that technological advancements play a pivotal role in shaping TM practices, offering tools and platforms to streamline recruitment, enhance PM, and facilitate PD. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, highlighted the rapid evolution of technology and its implications for TM. Digital platforms for recruitment, PM systems, and online PD programmes offer more efficient and effective ways to manage talent, “The rapid evolution of technology provides tools for more efficient TM, such as digital platforms for recruitment, PM systems, and online PD programme.” Emerging technologies such as AI and data analytics provide opportunities for making data-driven decisions in talent acquisition and management, improving accuracy and efficiency, “Emerging technologies like AI and data analytics can help in making more informed decisions regarding talent acquisition and management.”

Participant A8, a female expatriate senior coordinator, mentioned the impact of new workforce trends and technology on TM practices, “New workforce trends and technology.”

Participant A9, a female expatriate manager, emphasised the importance of technological infrastructure in supporting TM initiatives, “Technological infrastructure.” A robust technological infrastructure enables organisations to implement and leverage digital tools and platforms effectively, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of TM processes.

Participant F2, a female expatriate assistant professor, discussed the emergence of new platforms for recruitment, online training, and conferences abroad. Technological advancements have led to the proliferation of digital platforms that offer innovative solutions for talent acquisition, skill development, and knowledge sharing, expanding opportunities for TM practices. “In terms of the new platforms that have

emerged when it comes to recruitment, when it comes to also, let us say, online training, when it comes to even conferences abroad.”

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, emphasised the importance of robust technology infrastructure.

The above five participants discussed the role of technological advancements, but their focus was from different angles. Participant A7 discussed the rapid evolution of technology and its implications for TM, including digital recruitment platforms, PM systems, online PD programs, and emerging technologies like AI and data analytics for data-driven decision-making. In contrast, participant A8 reported on the influence of new workforce trends and technology, with no deeper details. Participant A9 reported on the importance of technological infrastructure, suggesting that organisations must have a solid foundation to implement TM tools and platforms effectively. Similarly, participant F4 supported A9 by highlighting the need for robust technology infrastructure. Meanwhile, Participant F2 focused on emerging digital platforms for recruitment, online training, and international conferences, highlighting how technology expands opportunities for talent acquisition, skill development, and knowledge sharing.

6.3.3.2 External Factors Restraining TM Policies and Practices

6.3.3.2.1 *Challenges in Innovation and Development*

One participant noted that innovation and development are vital components of TM practices, driving organisational growth and competitiveness. However, Participant A3, a male expatriate head of department, highlighted the challenge of limited talent availability, particularly in the Kuwaiti market. Compared to other countries, the talent pool in Kuwait may be smaller, especially for faculty members with advanced degrees. This scarcity of talent can hinder recruitment efforts and limit the organisation's ability to innovate and develop its workforce. “External factors actually restricted the availability of talent and especially in the Kuwait market, we can say that it's not quite big compared to other countries.”

Participant A3 focused on external constraints such as talent scarcity, while on the other hand the students concentrated on internal organisational barriers, such as resistance to change and a lack of self-driven progress, presenting complementary yet distinct perspectives on challenges to innovation in TM practices.

6.3.3.2.2 *Competition*

Five participants noted that competition posed significant challenges to TM policies and practices within their organisations. Participant A1, a female expatriate head of department, highlighted the emergence of non-traditional education providers, such as online platforms and corporate training programmes, as competitors in the talent market. These alternatives can attract potential students and faculty away from traditional educational institutions, necessitating differentiation and innovation in TM practices to remain competitive, “The rise of non-traditional education providers, like online platforms and corporate training programmes, can draw away potential students and faculty.”

Participant A8, a female expatriate senior coordinator, and A9, a female expatriate manager, mentioned competition as a factor influencing TM policies and practices. In a competitive market, organisations must adopt strategic approaches to TM to attract and retain top talent, ensuring their long-term success and sustainability “Competition.”

Participant F2, a female expatriate assistant professor, highlighted severe competition from new universities as a challenge in TM. The emergence of new players in the market intensifies competition for students, faculty, and resources, compelling organisations to adapt their TM practices to remain competitive and relevant, “There is severe competition from the new universities that have emerged.”

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, discussed how industry competition and job opportunities influence talent retention efforts. He stated that in competitive industries, employees may be enticed by more attractive offers from rival companies. He said, “Industry competition and the availability of job opportunities can impact talent retention efforts, as employees may be lured away by more attractive offers from rival companies.”

While participant A1 focused on external disruptors such as online platforms, A8, A9, and F2 addressed internal market dynamics and competition’s direct effect on recruitment and retention, highlighting its multifaceted impact on TM practices.

6.3.3.2.3 *Economic Constraints*

Three participants noted that economic constraints, such as downturns, reduced funding, or budget cuts, pose significant challenges to TM policies and practices within organisations. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, highlighted the impact of limited financial resources on TM initiatives. Economic downturns, reduced government funding, or declining enrolment can restrict institutions' ability to invest in TM, leading to freezes in hiring, salary increases, and PD opportunities, “Limited financial resources due to economic downturns, reduced government funding, or declining enrolment can significantly impact the ability of institutions to invest in talent management initiatives.” These budget constraints necessitate careful prioritisation and resource allocation in TM efforts.

Participant F3, a female expatriate assistant professor, referenced economic factors as potential constraints on TM practices. While not providing specific details, this participant suggests that economic considerations play a role in shaping TM strategies, “Some stuff that are economic.”

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, elaborated on how economic conditions such as recessions or downturns may lead to budget cuts and cost-saving measures, affecting the resources available for TM initiatives, “Economic conditions such as a recession or an economic downturn may lead to budget cuts and cost-saving measures, limiting the resources available for talent management initiatives.”

The three participants highlighted economic constraints as a significant challenge to TM but provided distinct levels of detail. Participant A7 offered a detailed analysis, highlighting specific economic challenges such as economic downturns, reduced government funding, and declining enrolment, which can lead to hiring freezes, salary stagnation, and limited PD opportunities. He also discussed the need for prioritisation and resource allocation in TM efforts. Participant F3, in contrast, made a general reference to economic constraints without specifying particular challenges. Participant F4's opinions were closer to A7's, elaborating on how recessions and economic downturns result in budget cuts and cost-saving measures, which ultimately reduce resources for TM initiatives.

6.3.3.2.4 Organisational Culture

Seven participants pointed out the influence of organisational culture, highlighting its complex and multifaceted impact on organisational practices, particularly in recruitment and TM. Participant A5, a male expatriate head of department, mentioned that organisational culture can have a negative impact on recruitment efforts, "Culture has a negative impact on recruitment."

Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, discussed the influence of Gulf cultural restrictions on Western practices, "Gulf cultural restrictions western side."

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, highlighted the impact of cultural and societal factors on TM strategies. Demographic shifts, changing employee expectations, and cultural diversity within the workforce require organisations to adapt their TM practices to cater to the needs and preferences of a diverse employee base, "Cultural and societal factors, including demographic shifts and changing employee expectations, can influence the effectiveness of TM strategies, requiring organisations to adapt their practices to cater to the needs and preferences of a diverse workforce."

Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, discussed the importance of providing clear direction to staff regarding cultural restraints, "Not providing direction for staff in relation to the use of the restraint."

Other participants, such as A9, a female expatriate manager, F5, a male expatriate senior instructor, and F6, a female national instructor, collectively highlighted the pervasive influence of culture, suggesting that it remains a critical consideration in shaping recruitment and TM efforts across various organisational levels.

6.3.3.2.5 Policies and regulations

Eight participants pointed out that policies and regulations, whether set by governmental bodies or internal organisational structures, can significantly impact TM policies and practices. Participant A1, a female expatriate head of department, highlighted the influence of labour laws and clear rules and regulations on work processes, "Clear rules and regulations on how to work and proceed."

Participant A1, a female expatriate head of department, discussed the preference for old policies and practices, suggesting resistance to change within the organisation. This resistance hinders the adoption of new TM strategies and practices, especially those aimed at meeting the evolving needs of the workforce, SA, Aftimos, DBA Thesis, Aston University 2024

“What's new with the newer generation is that they are easier to adapt because they are more in the sense that we want things to happen quickly.”

Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, mentioned restrictions related to certain nationalities and visa processes. Such constraints pose challenges in recruiting international talent and may require organisations to navigate complex visa and immigration procedures to bring in skilled workers, “Restrictions on certain nationalities. Visa and sending the offer.”

Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, emphasised the impact of changing legal and regulatory environments on TM practices. Compliance requirements, particularly regarding employment laws, visas, and work permits, increase administrative burdens and limit flexibility in TM efforts, especially in recruiting international talent. “Compliance requirements can also increase the administrative burden and limit flexibility in managing talent.”

Participant A9, a female expatriate manager, highlighted the influence of governmental bodies such as the PUC and political factors such as visa regulations on TM practices. “The Private University Council...politics such as visas.”

Participant F3, a female expatriate assistant professor, mentioned political situations as potential constraints on TM practices. Political instability or changes in government policies can create uncertainties and challenges for organisations in TM efforts, requiring them to adapt to evolving political landscapes.

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, discussed how government regulations and labour laws can impose restrictions on TM practices, “Government regulations and labour laws can impose restrictions on TM practices, making it challenging for organisations to effectively implement policies.”

Participant F5, a male expatriate senior instructor, and F5, a male expatriate senior instructor, also referenced government policies and procedures as influential factors in TM practices. They talked about the influence of government policies and regulations in hindering TM, “Government policies that we must adhere to.”

Participant F9, a female national assistant professor, noted the lack of clarity on operational guidelines or roles as a constraint on TM practices. Unclear policies and procedures can create confusion and inefficiencies in TM efforts, requiring organisations to establish clear guidelines and roles to facilitate smooth operations, “Lack of clarity on operational guidelines or roles.”

The participants stated that policies and regulations shape TM practices. However, their perspectives varied in focus and specificity. Participant A1 talked about how explicit rules and regulations guide work processes. He also pointed out resistance to change, particularly in adopting new TM strategies suited for evolving workforce needs. Participant A6 and participant A7 focused on visa and nationality restrictions, with A6 highlighting recruitment challenges due to complex immigration procedures and A7 expanding on how compliance requirements related to employment laws and work permits increase administrative

burdens and reduce TM flexibility. Participant A9 supported similar concerns, pointing out the influence of governmental bodies such as the PUC and political factors, such as visa regulations, on TM practices. Participant F4 provided a broader perspective, stating that government regulations and labour laws impose restrictions on TM, making it difficult for organisations to implement policies effectively. Similarly, Participant F3 highlighted the impact of political instability and shifting government policies, which create uncertainty in TM efforts. Participant F5 supported this by noting that government policies dictate TM compliance. Meanwhile, participant F9 took a more internal approach, pointing out that unclear operational guidelines and role definitions within organisations hinder TM effectiveness, leading to confusion and inefficiencies.

6.3.3.2.6 *Unfairness*

Two participants noted that unfairness in organisational processes can act as a significant constraint on TM policies and practices, impacting employee morale, engagement, and overall organisational effectiveness. Participant A3, a male expatriate head of department, highlighted the impact of bureaucratic processes on time management courses internally. Delays in decision-making and ineffective communication channels can lead to frustration among employees and disrupt TM initiatives, “So these bureaucratic processes of course affect our time management courses internally, because sometimes their reply might take a lot of time, and you might not get the answer that you would like to have.”

Participant A4, a male expatriate head of department, expressed concerns about unfairness in the evaluation process. Inconsistent or biased evaluation criteria can undermine trust in the PM system and diminish employees' confidence in the organisation's commitment to fair treatment, “Unfairness in evaluation process.”

6.3.4 Theme 4: Evaluating Talent: Processes and Effectiveness in Identification, Development, and Retention

6.3.4.1 Factors influencing TM

6.3.4.1.1 Appraisals

Three participants stated that appraisals are a critical aspect of TM, providing opportunities to assess employee performance, recognise achievements, and identify areas for development. Participant A2, a male expatriate coordinator, discussed the importance of PM, including structured performance appraisals that recognised staff achievements, provided feedback, and supported employee growth. He said, “PM, so having a performance structure that that recognises the achievements of the staff members as well as providing feedback to employees on how to how to grow as well as supporting them in the sense of ensuring that they are meeting their KPI's.”

Participant F2, a female expatriate assistant professor, described a proactive approach to performance appraisals, where employees are given opportunities to identify areas for improvement and participate in relevant training programmes. She noted, “Each year they do ask what areas you would like to improve in

and then they try to find training that fits in line with that and then they send emails, you know, to kind of have the similar to potential candidates sign up for those programmes and they cover the costs as well.”

Participant F6, a female national instructor, and F6, a female national instructor, highlighted the significance of performance evaluation and appraisals in TM practices, “Performance evaluation and appraisals.”

6.3.4.1.2 Awareness and Connection

Two participants noted that awareness and connection played significant roles in influencing TM practices. Participant A5, a male expatriate head of department, highlighted the importance of fostering connections within the organisation, “Connection.”

Participant F2, a female expatriate assistant professor, emphasised the significance of staff awareness, particularly among department heads, regarding employees' strengths, weaknesses, and PD needs. This awareness enables personalised support and guidance, ensuring that employees are positioned effectively within the organisation and provided with opportunities for growth and advancement. She said, “I think the awareness of the staff, like our heads of departments kind of have a good idea of each one of us and our strengths and our weaknesses and kind of help us grow and manage, let's say, the way that we're positioned in the organisation as well.”

6.3.4.1.3 Culture

Two participants stated that culture served as a significant factor influencing TM practices, as reported by the participants. Participant A2, a male expatriate coordinator, highlighted a culture of continuous learning and collaboration within the organisation. This culture emphasises leveraging individual strengths by providing workshops and seminars, fostering a sense of collective growth and development, “A culture of learning from one another, using the strengths of one to enable them to provide workshops and seminars in order to raise awareness and educate others as well.”

Participant A5, a male expatriate head of department, also stressed on the importance of culture in TM. Though brief, their mention of culture implied that the organisation's values, norms, and practices played a crucial role in shaping TM initiatives.

6.3.4.1.4 External Factors and Policies

Three participants stated that external factors and policies exerted significant influence on TM practices, as reported by the participants. Participant A5, a male expatriate head of department, mentioned “Kuwaitisation,” suggesting the influence of national policies or initiatives aimed at prioritising the employment of Kuwaiti nationals within organisations. Such policies could impact TM strategies, potentially affecting recruitment, selection, and career development practices, “Kuwaitisation.” Similarly, Participants A3, a male expatriate head of department, and A4, a male expatriate head of department, referred to “Kuwaitisation,” highlighting its relevance in shaping TM practices within their respective contexts.

6.3.4.1.5 Resource Management and Funding

Two participants mentioned that resource management and funding played a crucial role in shaping TM practices. Participant A4, a male expatriate head of department, pointed out the significance of financial resources in TM, suggesting that financial constraints could impact the allocation of resources and the effectiveness of TM initiatives, “Finance...load time efforts on both students and teachers.”

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, commented on the influence of financial resources on TM practices within universities. The participant noted that the availability of financial resources directly affected the implementation of talent attraction and retention programmes, “The financial resources available to a university can influence talent management practices. Adequate funding enables the university to invest in talent attraction and retention programmes.”

Additionally, participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, mentioned the demand of the market, which could be interpreted as an aspect of resource management. The demand from the market could influence the allocation of resources within the organisation, including those related to TM, “Demand of the market.”

6.3.4.2 Skill gap identification

6.3.4.2.1 Educational and Programme Development

Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, reported on the importance of mentorship in education and programme development for skill gap identification. Mentors are instrumental in guiding individuals through their learning journey, providing valuable insights and support to bridge skill gaps effectively, “Mentor.”

Participant F1, a male expatriate assistant professor, highlighted the curriculum's role in skill gap identification within educational settings. The curriculum served as a blueprint for delineating the skills required for various roles or professions, “We tend to look at what we need in our curriculum, and we look for skills.”

Participant F5, a male expatriate senior instructor, emphasised the importance of introducing new programmes to address identified skill gaps. Institutions needed to continually innovate and adapt their educational offerings to keep pace with changing industry requirements, “New programmes.”

6.3.4.2.2 Faculty competencies

Four participants discussed the importance of assessing and developing faculty competencies to address evolving educational needs. Participant A2, a male expatriate coordinator, described the implementation of a competency rating system to evaluate faculty skills, “We do have a competency rating system and in the event that employees do not meet expectations for certain skills, we have a process to address that.”

Participant A5, a male expatriate head of department, highlighted the significance of faculty competencies, particularly among full professors and engineers. Recognising the specialised nature of academic roles, institutions focus on assessing and enhancing the competencies of faculty members to ensure they are

well-equipped to deliver quality education and contribute effectively to their respective fields, “Full professors and engineers.”

Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, echoed the importance of competencies, extending beyond faculty to include administrators as well. Institutions recognised the diverse skill sets required across different roles within the academic community and prioritised competency development to meet these varied needs, “Competencies, faculty and admins.”

Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, emphasised the role of competency frameworks in skill gap identification and development. Institutions proactively develop or update competency frameworks to define the skills, knowledge, and behaviours essential for various roles within the academic environment. “Developing or updating competency frameworks that define the skills, knowledge, and behaviours required for various roles. This framework helps in mapping current capabilities against required competencies.”

6.3.4.2.3 *Feedback*

Four participants highlighted the importance of feedback mechanisms to gather insights from various stakeholders, enabling institutions to pinpoint areas for improvement and address skill deficiencies effectively. Participant A3, a male expatriate head of department, emphasised the value of feedback from students, describing a well-established feedback system aimed at understanding whether the institution met students' expectations and identifying any gaps in skills or processes. He said, “We have a very well-established feedback system from our students, and you are trying to understand if or people are employees are blocking the numbers really meet what they expect from us and if there is a gap that sense you are trying to understand, this gap is coming from of resulted from gap of skills or resulted from the problem the processes.”

Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, reported on the importance of gathering feedback from multiple sources, including peers, supervisors, subordinates, alumni, and employers, through mechanisms such as 360-degree feedback and surveys, “Gathering feedback from peers, supervisors, and subordinates (360-degree feedback) can offer a comprehensive view of an employee's skills and areas for improvement.”

Participant F2, a female expatriate assistant professor, highlighted the subjective nature of feedback, noting that it often depended on individual perceptions of skill deficiencies or areas for improvement. While feedback from supervisors is valuable, individuals themselves often play an active role in identifying areas where they feel they need to enhance their skills or knowledge. She noted, “It is based just on the individual themselves and what they feel they are lacking or where they would like to improve versus what the HoD that they report to identify as an area of improvement.”

Participant F4, a male expatriate associate professor, described feedback mechanisms involving students, colleagues, and stakeholders to evaluate professors' competencies and identify areas for improvement.

Surveys and departmental meetings served as channels for collecting feedback, enabling institutions to assess faculty performance and address any identified skill gaps through targeted interventions or PD programmes, “Feedback from students, colleagues, and relevant stakeholders is often gathered either through surveys or departmental meetings to evaluate professors' competencies and identify areas for improvement.”

6.3.4.2.4 HR and Organisational Perspective

In examining skill gap identification from the HR and organisational perspective, five participants offered insights into the role of HR departments and organisational structures in recognising and addressing skill gaps within academic settings. Participant A1, a female expatriate head of department, emphasised the importance of HR and manpower planning in identifying skill gaps, “HR, manpower, planning.”

Participant A3, a male expatriate head of department, focused on identifying skill gaps through the observation of vacancies in positions. Monitoring job vacancies provides HR departments with valuable information about areas where specific skills may be lacking, such as “The vacancies in the position.”

Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, highlighted the role of Heads of Departments (HoDs) in identifying skill gaps within their respective areas. As leaders within academic units, HoDs possess valuable insights into the skill requirements of different roles and can identify gaps through their interactions with faculty and administrators. “Some skill gaps can be identified by HoDs.”

Participant F2, a female expatriate assistant professor, discussed skill gap identification through personal relationships with HoDs. This informal approach allows employees to leverage their connections with supervisors to identify areas for improvement. While formal processes may exist, the participants emphasised the value of interpersonal dynamics in recognising skill deficiencies, “Based on, you know, personal relationships with the HoDs that they would kind of identify in terms of a formal process.”

Participant F3, a female expatriate assistant professor, emphasised the connection between job vacancies and skill gap identification. Unfilled positions or high turnover rates can signal areas where specific skills are lacking, which are called “Job vacancies.”

6.3.4.2.5 Performance Appraisals

Four participants discussed the role of performance appraisals in evaluating individual competencies and identifying areas for development. Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, highlighted the use of annual performance appraisals as a mechanism for assessing employee performance and identifying skill gaps, “Annual appraisal.”

Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, pointed out the importance of utilising performance appraisal systems to assess individual competencies comprehensively. Through these systems, organisations can systematically evaluate employee performance against predefined criteria, allowing managers to identify both strengths and areas for improvement. “Utilising performance appraisal systems

to assess individual competencies. These appraisals can reveal areas where employees excel and where they need further development.”

Participant A9, a female expatriate manager, also emphasised the role of performance appraisals and reviews in skill gap identification. By conducting regular performance evaluations, organisations can gather valuable feedback on employee performance and identify areas where additional support or training may be needed, such as “Performance appraisals and reviews.”

Participant F9, a female national assistant professor, similarly highlighted the importance of performance evaluation and appraisals in skill gap identification. Through these processes, organisations can assess employee performance against predefined standards and identify areas where further development or training may be necessary, such as “Performance evaluation and appraisals.”

6.3.4.2.6 Performance evaluation

Five participants emphasised the significance of performance evaluations as a means of assessing employee performance comprehensively. Participant A3, a male expatriate head of department, stated that as a manager, they closely observed performance throughout the PM period, monitoring various metrics and assessing both academic and administrative personnel. He said, “We go through the performance evaluations as a manager, the whole uh PM period, which is the whole education we are trying to observe very closely or every particular number plus or admin personnel and trying.”

Participant A5, a male expatriate head of department, highlighted the use of academic analysis throughout the academic year as a method of evaluating employee performance. By conducting regular assessments and analyses, organisations can gain insights into the competencies and capabilities of their workforce, enabling them to identify any gaps in skills or knowledge that may need to be addressed, such as “Academic – analysis academic year.”

Participant A8, a female expatriate senior coordinator, discussed the role of performance evaluations in identifying skill gaps among employees. By reviewing employee performance, competencies, and ongoing assessments, organisations can gain a comprehensive understanding of employee capabilities and areas for development “By reviewing the employee performance, competencies, and ongoing employee assessments.”

Participant A4, a male expatriate head of department, emphasised the importance of conducting performance evaluations to gauge the effectiveness and proficiency of professors in various areas such as teaching methodologies, research output, and administrative responsibilities, “Conducting performance evaluations, which gauge the effectiveness and proficiency of professors in key areas such as teaching methodologies, research output, and administrative responsibilities.”

Participant F6, a female national instructor, also emphasised the use of KPIs in performance evaluation processes. By setting clear performance metrics and regularly reviewing employee performance against

these indicators, organisations can identify any skill gaps or areas needing improvement and implement strategies to address them effectively. “Key performance indicators.”

6.3.4.2.7 Skill assessment

Four participants emphasised the importance of encouraging employees to conduct self-assessments. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, noted that by soliciting self-assessments, organisations can gain insights into employees' perceptions of their own skills and development needs, “Encouraging employees to conduct self-assessments can provide insights into their perception of their own skills and development needs.”

Participant A8, a female expatriate senior coordinator, mentioned the significance of ongoing employee assessments in identifying skill gaps. Regular assessments allow organisations to monitor employee performance and skill development over time, which is called ongoing employee assessments.

Participant A9, a female expatriate manager, highlighted the use of skills assessments in specific departments within the organisation. Skills assessments involve systematically evaluating employees' skill levels to identify gaps or areas for improvement, such as “Skills assessments in some departments.”

Participant F7, a male national assistant professor, emphasised the importance of defining the skills required for various roles within the organisation. By clearly delineating the skills needed for each position, organisations can more effectively assess employees' skill levels and identify any gaps that may exist, “Define the skills that are needed for the roles.”

6.3.4.2.8 Training and Development Programme Evaluations

Four participants discussed the evaluation of training and development programmes as a crucial aspect of identifying and addressing skill gaps within the organisation. Participant A4, a male expatriate head of department, mentioned the existence of policies for PD for faculty as an avenue for skill gap identification. By evaluating the effectiveness of these PD programmes, organisations can pinpoint areas where faculty may need further development, such as “Policy for PD for faculty. Areas of improvement.”

Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, highlighted the relationship between skill gaps and development programmes. Organisations often design training programmes specifically to address identified skill gaps among employees. By evaluating the impact of these programmes, organisations can determine their effectiveness in bridging skill gaps and enhancing employee capabilities, such as “Skill gap with a development programme.”

Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, emphasised the importance of evaluating existing training and development programmes to assess their effectiveness. Through rigorous evaluation, organisations can identify areas where training programmes may need enhancement or expansion to address skill gaps better, “Evaluating existing training and development programmes to determine their effectiveness and areas that may need enhancement or expansion.”

Participant F3, a female expatriate assistant professor, discussed the organisation's commitment to conducting workshops and training sessions aimed at filling skill gaps. The diverse topics covered in these workshops reflect the organisation's efforts to address a wide range of skill deficiencies among employees. He noted, "So when you do a lot of workshops, different topics, some training, training and research and so on, all of this indicates that the organisation you know is trying to fill the gaps of you know, missing skills or let us say, training people in different areas."

6.3.4.3 Talent monitoring and evaluation

6.3.4.3.1 Competency gaps

Two participants discussed how competency gaps are identified and addressed within the organisation. A2, a male expatriate coordinator, mentioned measuring competency gaps through recommendations from line managers or by identifying training needs to elevate employees' skills. He noted, "It's measured either through the recommendations of the line manager, especially if it's a specialised skill set that is required, or it's measured through the competency gaps in terms of training that we need to conduct in order to bring employees to a certain level."

Participant A6, a female expatriate senior manager, highlighted the identification and reduction of skill gaps as part of talent monitoring and evaluation processes, "Skill gaps. Reduced gap."

6.3.4.3.2 Cost-Benefit Analysis

Two participants, A6, a female expatriate senior manager, and A7, a male expatriate executive member, discussed the importance of conducting cost-benefit analyses to evaluate the financial impact of TM initiatives against their benefits. A6 specifically mentions calculating the Return on Investment (ROI) for PD initiatives, "Evaluating the financial impact of talent management initiatives in relation to their benefits, such as increased productivity, improved quality of teaching and research, and enhanced reputation."

6.3.4.3.3 Cultural Development and Leadership Support

Three participants discussed the role of cultural development and leadership support. Participant A2, a male expatriate coordinator, emphasised the role of PM in providing feedback and fostering career growth for employees, reflecting a culture of continuous learning and development: "We do have our PM which we evaluate all our faculty staff and we, I mean heads of departments are expected to provide feedback to their staff as well as to have this interaction with their employees in terms of career growth."

Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, outlined various aspects of leadership support for TM, including resource allocation, integration with strategic plans, and fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation, "Top leadership, including the board, president, and deans, are committed to talent management as a strategic priority."

Participant F3, a female expatriate assistant professor, and participant F5, a male expatriate senior instructor, also discussed feedback mechanisms within the organisation, such as employee surveys and suggestion boxes, indicating a culture of openness to feedback and continuous improvement. For

example, the “Employee suggestion box.” Faculty are encouraged to share feedback with our head of department and Dean. Even the promotion criteria is clear and transparent for our positions.

6.3.4.3.4 Feedback Mechanisms

Two participants, A2, a male expatriate coordinator, and A7, a male expatriate executive member, highlighted the importance of utilising surveys and feedback mechanisms to gather insights from administrators, faculty, students, and other stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of TM processes, “Gathering feedback from other stakeholders, such as students, alumni, and industry partners, to get an external perspective on the effectiveness of the university's talent management.”

6.3.4.3.5 Performance Appraisals and Reviews

Participants discussed the role of performance appraisals and reviews in talent monitoring and evaluation. Participants A1, A4, A7, A8, and A9 all mentioned conducting periodic performance appraisals to assess individual achievements, identify areas for improvement, and evaluate overall TM effectiveness, “Employees set appraisals and HoD qualitative. Students’ extra activities to the course. Results, grades, success or not with training or programming.”

6.3.4.3.6 Training and Development Assessments

Two participants, A7, a male expatriate executive member and A9, a female expatriate manager, discussed evaluating the outcomes of training and development programmes to measure their effectiveness and ensure continuous improvement and adaptation, “Evaluating the outcomes of training and development programmes through assessments, participant feedback, and measuring the application of learned skills in the workplace.”

6.3.5 Theme 5: Influential Stakeholders in Talent Management Implementation

6.3.5.1 Alumni Associations and Community

Six participants identified alumni and the community as influential stakeholders. Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, highlighted the significance of alumni associations in TM implementation. Alumni, as former students, are seen as essential stakeholders due to their vested interest in the university's reputation and success. They can contribute valuable networking opportunities, mentorship, and sometimes even financial resources. Participants F5, F6, F7, F8, and F9 also emphasised the importance of the community, which includes alumni, as influential stakeholders in TM. They may contribute to the university's success through various means such as networking, mentorship, and financial support, “Alumni, as former students, have a vested interest in the reputation and success of the university. They can provide valuable networking opportunities, serve as mentors, and sometimes contribute to university resources.”

6.3.5.2 Heads of Departments

One participant identified departmental heads as key stakeholders. The HR department, represented by Participant A7, a male expatriate executive member, is identified as a pivotal stakeholder in TM

implementation. They play a critical role in designing and executing TM processes such as recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and succession planning.

6.3.5.3 Administrators and Faculty

Six participants identified administrators and faculty as central stakeholders in TM, given their direct impact on the university's success through their skills, expertise, and performance. Participants A8, F5, F6, F7, F8, and F9 identified employees, both academic and non-academic, as influential stakeholders in TM implementation, "Employees (academic /non-academic)."

6.3.5.4 Government agencies and regulatory bodies

Six participants A7, F5, F6, F7, F8, and F9 discussed the importance of government agencies and regulatory bodies as stakeholders in TM. These entities set educational standards, provide funding, and establish regulations that impact TM practices, "Accreditation agencies establish standards that universities must meet, which often include criteria related to faculty qualifications, research capabilities, and administrative competencies."

6.3.5.5 Student organisations and representatives

Participants emphasised the significance of students as significant stakeholders in TM implementation. The quality of education and support services they receive directly affect their satisfaction and learning outcomes. Participants A8, F5, F6, F7, F8, and F9 were identified as influential stakeholders in TM, underscoring their importance in shaping the university's policies and practices through their feedback and engagement, "Students are major stakeholders as the quality of education and support services they receive is directly affected by the talent management practices of the university. Talented administrators and faculty contribute to better learning outcomes and overall student satisfaction."

6.4 Student Voice

In this segment, insights from student interviews are explored, shedding light on their personal experiences, viewpoints, and obstacles concerning TM at University XYZ, where they are enrolled. This analysis is crucial for understanding the student body's interaction with TM and identifying areas for improvement. Their responses reveal a complex landscape of learner engagement and highlight the necessity for tailored solutions to enhance the TM experience at the university.

6.4.1 Theme 1: Institutional Vision and Policy Influence on TM Practices in Higher Education

6.4.1.1 Talent Management Practices

6.4.1.1.1 Implementation Challenges and Support

Two students have expressed concerns regarding the lack of clear standards and guidelines for TM within HEIs. For instance, S5, a male expatriate Level 2 student stated, "Do not know the standards," indicating a significant gap in communication and transparency. Similarly, S7, a male expatriate Level 4 student, notes, "There is no set of standards that define how talent management should be done," highlighting the need for well-defined procedures and benchmarks to guide TM practices.

6.4.1.1.2 Recruitment and Attraction

The recruitment and attraction of talented employees are vital components of TM. S4, a male national Level 3 student, highlights the importance of "Attracting and recruiting talented employees," suggesting that HEIs must develop robust strategies to identify and entice potential talent.

6.4.1.1.3 Strategic Management

Strategic management of talent is essential for sustaining growth and innovation in HEIs. S7, a male expatriate Level 4 student, asserts, "I believe that talent management is growing in many countries," reflecting the global trend towards prioritising TM in educational settings.

6.4.1.1.4 Talent Assessment

According to the students, assessment of talent involved evaluating the skills and potential of individuals to contribute to the institution's goals. S3, a female national Level 3 student defined talent as "Someone who is really skilful in both talent acquired and innate skill", while S4, a male national Level 3 student emphasised "Taking assessment." However, there are challenges in maintaining these standards, as noted by S5, a male expatriate Level 2 student, "Do not know how to maintain it." Additionally, S6, a female expatriate Level 4 student suggested, "This semester has the potential," indicating that ongoing evaluation and adaptation are crucial for successful talent assessment.

6.4.1.2 Talent Management Processes

6.4.1.2.1 Agility and Adaptability

Participant S7, a male expatriate Level 4 student, highlighted the necessity for HEIs to demonstrate flexibility in their TM processes. His statement, "Yes, we focus on hiring talent that falls within multiple different categories," shows the importance of adopting a diverse and adaptable approach in talent acquisition.

6.4.1.2.2 Career Development and Aspirations

Participant S1, a male national Level 3 student, noted that the culture of XYZ University attracts high-achieving individuals, such as those with a 4.0 GPA, pointing out that career development within the institution may be heavily influenced by academic excellence, "Culture XYZ University attracts 4.0 GPA students." From the student perspective, S1 highlights institutional prestige and academic excellence as key drivers of career development, suggesting a merit-based trajectory heavily influenced by performance metrics.

6.4.1.2.3 Engagement and Communication

Participant S1, a male national Level 3 student, emphasised the significance of cultural factors, specifically pointing to the role of Kuwait's social and group networks, "Culture – Kuwait Groups / society network." This shows that for S1, career development is closely tied to understanding and navigating local societal networks.

On the other hand, participant S7, a male expatriate Level 4 student, focused on how individuals fit within a team, indicating that his view of career development is more centred around team dynamics and SA, Aftimos, DBA Thesis, Aston University 2024

collaboration, “how will they fit within a team.” S1 emphasised the cultural context, highlighting Kuwait's social and group networks as critical for career development, suggesting a reliance on local societal connections for professional advancement. S7, however, took a more interpersonal approach, focusing on team dynamics and collaboration, indicating that individual career success is linked to one's ability to integrate and work effectively within a team. S1 stressed cultural navigation, and S7 highlighted interpersonal adaptability, collectively offering a multifaceted view of engagement and career development.

6.4.1.2.4 Open to Change

Participant S5, a male expatriate Level 2 student, expressed a positive view on openness to change, stating, “Yes, open environment.” This brief yet impactful statement suggests that University XYZ is an environment where change is embraced and welcomed.

6.4.1.2.5 Performance and Competitiveness

Participant S3, a female national Level 3 student, acknowledged the importance of competition in the context of performance, noting that workshops contribute to this competitive environment, “Yes, I believe so. Competition, workshops some students are shy.” However, she also mentioned that some students may be shy, indicating that personal traits, such as introversion or a lack of confidence, can affect how individuals engage in competitive settings.

On the other hand, participant S7, a male expatriate Level 4 student, focused more on the external factors involved in assessing performance and competitiveness, particularly in the context of hiring. He mentioned the importance of checking for culture and experience when hiring someone for a specific role, “We check for culture, experience for the specific role we are hiring them for.”

6.4.2 Theme 2: Facilitators and Barriers: Internal Factors in Implementing TM Policies and Practices

6.4.2.1 Internal Factors Facilitating TM Policy Implementation

6.4.2.1.1 Organisational Culture and Structure

A supportive organisational culture and structure are pivotal for implementing TM policies. S6, a female expatriate Level 4 student, mentions “Culture,” showing that a positive and inclusive culture can facilitate the adoption and execution of TM practices.

6.4.2.1.2 Training and Development

Ongoing training and development are crucial for maintaining a skilled and competent workforce. S2, a female national Level 2 student, just mentioned “Tutoring,” as a form of training and development, which could suggest that continuous learning opportunities are essential for TD and retention.

6.4.2.2 Internal Factors Restraining TM Policy Implementation

6.4.2.2.1 Lack of Development

A lack of development opportunities can hinder TM efforts. S2, a female national Level 2 student, points out the “GPA. Foundation exam,” showing that rigid academic criteria and limited development programmes can impede the growth of talent within HEIs.

6.4.2.2.2 Resistance to Change

Resistance to change is a common barrier to effective TM. S6, a female expatriate Level 4 student highlighted "Resistance to change," as a factor restraining TM policy implementation.

6.4.3 Theme 3: Facilitators and Barriers: External Factors in Implementing TM Policies and Practices

6.4.3.1 External Factors Facilitating TM Policies and Practices

6.4.3.1.1 Compensation

Competitive compensation is a crucial external factor that facilitates TM. Participant S6, a female expatriate Level 4 student, reported that compensation depended on the location of the job, "Average salary for position based on where the potential candidate is located." S6 brought attention to regional disparities in compensation, highlighting the geographical influence on salary structures.

6.4.3.1.2 Competition

Participant S1, a male national Level 3 student, talked about new competitors in the market while F6, a female national instructor, and F9, a female national assistant professor, pointed out the competitive landscape in the market.

6.4.3.1.3 Cultural and Societal Values

The students' perspectives on cultural and societal values emphasise inclusivity, diversity, and adaptability. S3, a female national Level 3 student, highlighted the importance of diversity. S4, a male national Level 3 student, focused on fostering a wider range of skills to meet societal needs. S7, a male expatriate Level 4 student, highlighted the need to accommodate disabilities and demographic requirements, reflecting a collective call for equitable and versatile approaches in education and talent management. "Accommodating for disabilities and demographic requirements."

The students' perspectives, including S3, S4, and S7, reinforced this emphasis on inclusivity, diversity, and adaptability, with S7 specifically mentioning the need to accommodate disabilities and demographic requirements.

6.4.3.1.4 Global Workforce Trends

The students' views on global workforce trends highlight the evolving nature of employment and talent mobility. S3, a female national Level 3 student, emphasised the diversification of job roles and activities, reflecting the dynamic demands of the global job market, while S4, a male national Level 3 student, pointed to the significant presence of expatriates.

The students focused on the practical shifts in job roles and the growing presence of expatriates, highlighting the ongoing evolution of the global labour landscape. Students, S3 and S4, offered perspectives on the evolving nature of employment, with S3 noting the diversification of job roles and S4 pointing out the prominence of expatriates.

6.4.3.1.5 Market Dynamics

The students' opinions on market dynamics emphasise the interconnected factors shaping the job market. S4, a male national Level 3 student, pointed to the economy as a key driver. S6, a female expatriate Level 4 student, highlighted globalisation and the importance of being aware of evolving knowledge demands. S7, a male expatriate Level 4 student, addressed the role of cost of living in influencing hiring decisions, "Average cost of living based on candidates' location."

Students reflected on broader economic and global factors that influence hiring and job market trends. The students' perspectives further highlighted the interconnectedness of market dynamics, with S4 recognising the economy as a key driver, S6 pointing to globalisation and evolving knowledge demands, and S7 considering the cost of living as a factor influencing hiring decisions.

6.4.3.1.6 Resource Management and Allocation

Effective resource management and allocation are vital for TM. S2, a female national Level 2 student, mentions "Customer comments. word of mouth," suggesting that feedback and resource allocation impact TM outcomes.

6.4.3.1.7 Technological Advancements

Two students shared their opinions on technological advancements. S3, a female national Level 3 student, called for updates to technology and marketing strategies to remain competitive, and S5, a male expatriate Level 2 student, pointed to the integration of online platforms, apps, and tools like Tabby.

6.4.3.2 External Factors Restraining TM Policies and Practices

6.4.3.2.1 Challenges in Innovation and Development

The students' perspectives on challenges in innovation and development reveal obstacles in progress and adaptability. S2, a female national Level 2 student, criticised companies for stagnation and a lack of self-improvement, "The Company is not improving themselves. Staying in the same level." S5, a male expatriate Level 2 student, highlighted narrow thinking and resistance to new ideas and change, "narrow thinking, new ideas and change." S6, a female expatriate Level 4 student, emphasised the difficulty of finding opportunities that truly add value.

6.4.3.2.1 Economic Constraints

The students' perspectives on challenges in innovation and development reveal obstacles in progress and adaptability. S2, a female national Level 2 student, criticised companies for stagnation and a lack of self-improvement, "The Company is not improving themselves. Staying in the same level." S5, a male expatriate Level 2 student, highlighted narrow thinking and resistance to new ideas and change, "narrow thinking, new ideas and change." S6, a female expatriate Level 4 student, emphasised the difficulty of finding opportunities that truly add value.

6.4.3.2.2 Policies and Regulations

The students', S4, a male national Level 3 student, highlighted the challenge of navigating uncontrollable governmental policies, while S7, a male expatriate Level 4 student, acknowledged the necessity of

adhering to these regulations, emphasising the importance of compliance and adaptability in meeting policy requirements, "Government policies that we must adhere to."

6.4.4 Theme 4: Evaluating Talent: Processes and Effectiveness in Identification, Development, and Retention

6.4.4.1 Skill Gap Identification

6.4.4.1.1 Feedback

Feedback is essential for identifying skill gaps. S2, a female national Level 2 student, mentions "Interviews," indicating that regular feedback mechanisms help in recognising areas for improvement and development.

6.4.4.1.2 Performance Evaluation

Performance evaluation is critical for effective TM. S2, a female national Level 2 student, and S7, a male expatriate Level 4 student, highlight "Appraisal" and "Performance is determined by KPIs," suggesting that systematic performance reviews are necessary for identifying and addressing skill gaps.

6.4.4.1.3 Word of Mouth

Word of mouth plays a role in talent identification. S1, a male national Level 3 student, and S6, a female expatriate Level 4 student, mention "Word of mouth," indicating that informal networks and peer recommendations contribute to talent identification.

6.4.4.2 Talent Monitoring and Evaluation

6.4.4.2.1 Cultural Development and Leadership Support

Cultural development and leadership support are vital for talent monitoring and evaluation. S4, a male national Level 3 student, and S6, a female expatriate Level 4 student, mention "As a student course more innovative" and "Potential talent," indicating that a supportive culture and leadership commitment are crucial for effective TM.

6.4.5 Theme 5: Influential Stakeholders in Talent Management Implementation

6.4.5.1 Heads of Departments

The students' views on influential stakeholders emphasise the importance of leadership and financial oversight in organisational decision-making. S3, a female national Level 3 student, highlighted the roles within the financial department, while both S5 and S6, a male and female expatriate Level 4 students, emphasised the need for HoDs recognising leadership at the departmental level as crucial for effective management and direction.

6.4.5.2 Administrators and Faculty

Administrators and faculty are critical stakeholders in TM. S3, a female national Level 3 student, and S6, a female expatriate Level 4 student, mention "instructors" and "academic advisors," indicating their critical role in mentoring, developing, and retaining talent.

6.4.5.3 Student Organisations and Representatives

Student organisations and representatives are influential in TM. S3, a female national Level 3 student, states, "The main customers are students," suggesting that student input and representation are essential for aligning TM practices with student needs and expectations.

6.4 Chapter Summary

Chapter Six provides a comprehensive analysis of the data collected from the interviews with twenty-five participants at University XYZ. The thematic analysis revealed five major themes, as discussed throughout Chapter Six. Each theme encompasses several subthemes, providing a comprehensive understanding of the various dimensions influencing TM in HEIs, specifically at University XYZ. The participants' quotes support the themes, providing rich narrative insights into the TM practices at University XYZ in Kuwait. The findings identified in Chapter Six are now considered in further detail in Chapter Seven, where discussion of these findings will be compared with existing literature identified in Chapters Three and Four.

Chapter 7: Discussion on Key Findings

7.0 Introduction

This study aims to examine the TM practices employed within a HEI, University XYZ, in Kuwait. By delving into the processes through which academic talent is defined, recruited, and managed, this research seeks to offer a thorough understanding of TM within the distinct cultural and organisational framework of the Kuwaiti HEI. This study investigates the implementation and evaluation of TM practices while identifying the key factors that influence these processes. The research is guided by two central questions: RQ1: “How are talent management practices implemented and evaluated in a HEI in Kuwait?” and RQ2: “What are the key influencing factors impacting talent management practices in a higher educational institution in Kuwait?”

Chapter Seven presents a detailed analysis of the findings contextualised within the broader literature on TM in HE. It provides critical insights into the practical application of TM strategies and evaluates their effectiveness. This chapter also focuses on the contribution to theory, limitations of this study and the contribution to practice. This discussion also sets the stage for the subsequent chapter, which will build upon these findings to offer discussions and recommendations. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key insights discussed and foreshadows the conclusions in Chapter Eight.

7.1 Answering the Research Questions

In section 7.1, the four sub-research questions will be answered based on the findings collected from the case study.

7.1.1 Question 1: How do the institutional vision and policies influence talent management practices in the higher educational institution?

Theme 1: Institutional Vision and Policy Influence on Talent Management Practices in Higher Education

Implementation Challenges and Support

Participants identified the absence of clear governing TM standards as a significant barrier to effective implementation. This challenge, discussed by four participants, affects consistency, creates biases, and reduces stakeholder confidence. Participants advocated for strategic approaches, alignment with organisational goals, and strong management support. The participants' perspectives align with Sparrow and Makram (2015) stated that undefined standards hinder TM enforcement and increase bias. Similarly, Collings et al. (2019) is supported by the participants' views by stressing that strategic TM aligns talent initiatives with organisational objectives. Leadership support, highlighted by Dries (2013), is pivotal for effective implementation and talent retention.

Motivation and Engagement

Six participants highlighted the significance of motivation and engagement in cultivating a positive work environment, aligning with established research on employee satisfaction and retention. Career planning, research incentives, well-being promotion, and recognition of top performers emerged as key factors. This perspective resonates with Boxall and Purcell (2016), who argue that compensation and well-defined job roles provide a foundation for employee motivation. However, participants extended this view by emphasising the role of career development and incentives in fostering long-term commitment.

Anitha (2014) further supports this notion, highlighting career progression and PD as critical for enhancing employee dedication. Participants' emphasis on well-being aligns with Page and Vella-Brodrick (2013), who found that wellness programmes contribute to job satisfaction and mitigate burnout. Notably, this perspective reflects a growing shift from traditional compensation models to holistic engagement strategies that incorporate well-being.

Moreover, the recognition of top performers, emphasised both by participants and Gallup (2020), shows the psychological impact of acknowledgment in reinforcing morale and retention. Regular recognition serves as both a motivational tool and a mechanism for sustaining high-performance cultures. Together, these findings suggest that an integrated approach combining financial incentives, career growth opportunities, well-being initiatives, and recognition creates a more engaged and committed workforce.

Recruitment and Attraction

Three participants stressed the need of innovative recruitment strategies to secure top talent. They identified work-life balance, diversity and inclusion, and remote work as critical components for modern recruitment practices. Participants highlighted the necessity of innovative recruitment strategies to attract and retain top talent, emphasising work-life balance, diversity, inclusion, and remote work as pivotal factors. Their insights support Boudreau and Ziskin (2016), who advocate for holistic talent acquisition approaches that prioritise flexibility and inclusivity. However, participants extended this perspective by amplifying the practical implementation of these strategies in response to evolving workforce expectations.

Work-life balance, a key component of modern recruitment, is linked to employee satisfaction and reduced turnover, as supported by Allen et al. (2017). Participants reinforced this idea but placed particular emphasis on how organisations must integrate work-life balance into recruitment messaging to attract top-tier candidates. Additionally, their focus on remote work aligns with Boudreau and Ziskin's (2016) argument that embracing flexibility expands access to global talent pools. Yet, participants' reflections suggest that remote work is no longer merely an option but an essential strategy for remaining competitive in a globalised job market.

The focus on diversity and inclusion suggests a deeper shift in recruitment priorities, one that moves beyond compliance to actively fostering an equitable and attractive work culture. This indicates a broader trend in which organisations not only adapt to but anticipate workforce changes, ensuring their recruitment strategies are forward-thinking and responsive to candidate expectations. These findings suggest that organisations must adopt a multi-faceted, adaptive approach to recruitment, leveraging flexibility, inclusivity and remote work as key drivers of long-term talent acquisition success.

Strategic Management

Four participants highlighted the strategic importance of leadership succession planning and talent pipeline development. Their perspectives reflect a growing recognition that succession planning is not merely a reactive measure but a proactive strategy for sustaining performance and fostering employee growth. Conger and Fulmer (2017) describe succession planning as a critical approach to ensuring organisational continuity by preparing internal candidates for leadership roles. This is supported by the participants' views on the necessity of structured TD to maintain stability and drive long-term success. Groves (2017) reinforces this perspective, emphasising leadership development as essential for mitigating disruptions during transitions. Participants' insights suggest that beyond stability, well-planned succession fosters a leadership culture that nurtures talent from within, reducing reliance on external hires and preserving institutional knowledge.

Cappelli and Keller (2017) further argue that a strong talent pipeline enhances organisational agility, enabling businesses to anticipate and respond effectively to workforce challenges. The emphasis participants placed on aligning these practices with organisational culture suggests that leadership succession is not just about filling positions but about cultivating leaders who embody the organisation's values and strategic vision. Participants' perspectives and literature indicate that effective succession planning requires a long-term, integrated approach one that prioritises leadership readiness, cultural fit, and strategic adaptability in an evolving business landscape.

Career Development and Aspirations

Five participants discussed career development as crucial for nurturing skills, knowledge, and aspirations. They called for diverse training opportunities, professional networking, and employee awareness of available programmes. Their perspectives are in line with Hall and Mirvis (2016), who emphasise the role of structured career development in helping employees achieve their long-term goals. Similarly, Clarke and Patrickson (2019) highlight the need for varied training and education initiatives to enhance employee capabilities, a point reinforced by participants who stressed the need for continuous learning opportunities.

Beechler and Woodward (2018) further argue that professional networking plays a crucial role in broadening career prospects and fostering collaboration. Participants' emphasis on networking suggests a recognition that career growth extends beyond formal training and includes relationship-building within and outside the organisation. However, a notable gap emerges in their discussion. While they focused on broad career opportunities, they did not address the need for personalised career development plans tailored to individual goals. McGuire and Rhodes (2016) argue that individualised career development strategies are essential for aligning organisational objectives with employee aspirations. This oversight suggests an area for improvement, particularly for University XYZ, where career development initiatives could be enhanced by incorporating structured, personalised career pathways. By integrating both broad development opportunities and individualised planning, organisations can create more effective strategies that support both employee growth and long-term institutional success.

Talent Assessment

Eleven participants highlighted talent assessment as vital for identifying, evaluating, and developing individual capabilities. They stress the need for leadership skills among managers and HoDs to enhance TM and overall organisational performance. Their perspectives support existing literature, reinforcing the significance of structured assessment and leadership development initiatives.

Pulakos et al. (2019) advocate for systematic talent assessment processes, highlighting regular evaluations and feedback as essential tools for identifying high-potential employees and fostering continuous growth. Similarly, Cormier and Hagman (2019), emphasise the role of leadership training programmes in equipping managers with the necessary skills to mentor and motivate teams effectively. The participants' emphasis on leadership skills aligns with these studies, underscoring the critical link between talent assessment and leadership effectiveness.

Beyond supporting the literature, participants added a practical dimension by highlighting the need for tailored leadership development strategies that align with organisational needs. Their focus suggests that leadership training should not follow a one-size-fits-all approach but instead should be tailored to address specific managerial challenges and industry demands. This perspective reinforces the idea that integrating talent assessment with targeted leadership development enhances team performance, strengthens employee engagement, and improves talent retention.

Agility and Adaptability

Participants discussed the significance of agility and adaptability for organisations, highlighting their role in fostering innovation, growth, and responsiveness to dynamic environments. These views are consistent with Wenzel et al. (2020), who identify organisational agility as a combination of flexible decision-making, decentralised structures, and continuous improvement. Similarly, Teece et al. (2016) argue that dynamic

capabilities, such as reconfiguring internal and external competencies, are critical for maintaining competitive advantage.

However, an interesting gap emerges in their discussion. While participants concentrated on organisational agility, they did not address workforce agility, a critical factor in ensuring long-term adaptability. De Meuse et al. (2019) advocate for employee development as a key strategy for building resilient and adaptable workforces. Their research suggests that training employees in critical thinking and problem-solving enhances agility at an individual level, complementing broader organisational efforts. This gap highlights an opportunity for organisations to integrate workforce agility into their adaptability strategies, ensuring that both structural and human capital factors contribute to sustained innovation and growth.

Compensation and incentives

Participants stressed that compensation and incentives were important in influencing employee motivation, engagement, and retention. The supporting literature affirms their views, highlighting the essential function of well-organised compensation systems in enhancing job satisfaction and performance. However, they also identified significant inconsistencies in implementation, including outdated job descriptions, the absence of ToR, inconsistent salary scales, and an underdeveloped reward system.

Cappelli (2019) states that clearly defined job roles enhance employee satisfaction and performance, yet participants reported that their organisation struggles to maintain updated job descriptions, leading to role ambiguity and inefficiencies. Similarly, Cascio (2019) stresses that structured ToR are essential for establishing fairness and trust in the workplace; two factors that participants indicated are currently lacking within University XYZ. Their concerns suggest that without clear guidelines, employees may experience uncertainty regarding expectations, responsibilities, and career progression.

Participants' concerns about inconsistent salary scales align with Milkovich and Newman (2018), who argue that equitable compensation is crucial for minimising dissatisfaction and maintaining workforce stability. The absence of salary consistency within University XYZ reflects a broader challenge in ensuring transparency and fairness in pay structures. Additionally, Gerhart and Milkovich (2019) emphasise the value of diverse reward systems, including bonuses and recognition, in fostering a culture of achievement. Participants' observations indicate that such incentives remain underutilised, presenting an opportunity for the organisation to enhance its retention strategies by implementing a more comprehensive and structured approach to rewards.

This shows the need for University XYZ to address these gaps by modernising job descriptions, formalising ToR, ensuring pay equity, and expanding its reward system. By doing so, the institution can strengthen

employee motivation and engagement while fostering a more transparent and equitable work environment.

Engagement and Communication

Participants identified engagement and communication as pivotal in building a sense of community and shared purpose. They observed the absence of structured feedback mechanisms and inconsistent employee involvement in decision-making processes. These perspectives support existing literature, highlighting the importance of structured communication processes in enhancing employee involvement and organisational cohesion. However, they also pointed to key challenges, including the absence of structured feedback mechanisms and inconsistent employee participation in decision-making. Open communication channels and forums for employee input were highlighted as areas needing development.

Men & Stacks (2020) validates the participants' observations, emphasising that effective communication and employee engagement are crucial for organisational success. Rees and Porter (2019) further support this by highlighting the value of regular feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and focus groups, in promoting transparency and addressing employee concerns. Similarly, Li et al. (2018) argue that involving employees in decision-making fosters a sense of ownership, which participants noted as a missing element within University XYZ. Without structured opportunities for employee input, organisations risk disengagement and reduced commitment.

Participants also stressed the need for leadership development in communication skills, a perspective supported by Shockley-Zalabak (2019), who identified leadership communication as central to employee engagement and trust-building. Saks and Gruman (2018) findings are reinforced by advocating for a positive work environment characterised by trust, respect, and collaboration, factors that have yet to be fully optimised at University XYZ. These findings suggest that enhancing communication strategies, implementing structured feedback systems, and strengthening leadership communication skills could significantly improve employee engagement. By addressing these gaps, University XYZ can foster a more inclusive, transparent, and collaborative workplace culture.

Management and Support

Participants highlighted the role of management and support in tailoring TM strategies to employees' unique needs and preferences, ensuring retention, and implementing structured policies and procedures. Their perspectives are in line with existing literature, stressing the importance of personalised approaches in enhancing retention and implementing structured policies and procedures. However, participants also identified gaps in the current system, particularly in specialised retention strategies and the formalisation of recruitment, PM, and career development policies.

Scullion and Collings (2011) advocate for personalised TM strategies to maximise employee potential, aligning with participants' views that tailored approaches improve job satisfaction and long-term commitment. Similarly, Sarros et al. (2017) highlight the need for clear retention strategies to foster a sense of security and belonging, an aspect that participants noted as insufficiently addressed at University XYZ. Without well-defined retention initiatives, employees may feel undervalued, leading to higher turnover rates.

Participants also stressed the importance of structured policies and procedures to ensure consistency and efficiency. This aligns with Martin & Schmidt (2017), who argue that formalised frameworks provide stability and transparency in TM processes. Additionally, Avery et al. (2017) recommend mentoring, coaching, and counselling programs as crucial for employee development and work-life balance. While participants recognised the value of such initiatives, they observed that these measures are not fully implemented within University XYZ, suggesting a missed opportunity to enhance engagement and professional growth.

These findings indicate that strengthening TM strategies through structured policies, clear retention initiatives, and personalised employee support systems could significantly improve workforce stability and productivity at University XYZ.

Open to change

Being open to change is crucial for adapting, fostering innovation, and supporting growth. However, while participants recognised the importance of change, they did not fully address the role of leadership and continuous learning in facilitating effective transitions.

Kotter (2012) argues that cultures promoting change drive collaboration and innovation, aligning with participants' views that an organisation must be receptive to transformation. Similarly, Cameron and Green (2015) highlight the need for structured CM principles, while Amabile (2018) emphasises fostering creativity as a means of enabling organisations to seize opportunities effectively. Participants' emphasis on cultivating an open and adaptive culture reflects these findings, indicating the importance of organisational mindset in navigating change.

However, participants did not consider the critical role of adaptive leadership in guiding change initiatives. Heifetz and Linsky (2017) stress that leaders equipped with adaptive skills can inspire confidence and mobilise stakeholders, ensuring that transformation efforts are successful. Additionally, organisational learning mechanisms, as discussed by Argyris and Schön (1996), drive continuous improvement and knowledge sharing, critical elements that participants did not highlight but are crucial for sustaining adaptability. The absence of these considerations at University XYZ suggests an opportunity to integrate leadership development and structured learning processes into its CM strategies.

By fostering a leadership approach that embraces adaptation and implementing learning mechanisms that facilitate continuous improvement, University XYZ can strengthen its ability to manage change effectively.

Performance and Competitiveness

Participants stressed regular performance assessments, goal alignment, and feedback mechanisms as crucial for maintaining competitiveness. The participants' views align with Aguinis (2019a) who highlight the significance of robust PM systems for setting expectations, tracking progress, and providing continuous feedback. Similarly, Kaplan and Norton (2008) advocate cascading organisational goals into individual targets through frameworks such as the Balanced Scorecard, ensuring strategic alignment. Bracken et al. (2016) further emphasise the importance of 360-degree feedback mechanisms in fostering accountability and professional growth, reinforcing participants' call for structured feedback processes.

While participants focused on aligning PM with organisational objectives, they did not highlight the role of individualised development plans. Werner and DeSimone (2019) argue that such plans are essential in addressing employee aspirations while ensuring alignment with broader organisational goals. This omission suggests an opportunity for University XYZ to integrate personalised development initiatives into its PM strategy, thereby enhancing employee engagement and long-term retention.

Summary of Theme 1

The findings indicate that institutional vision and policies play a pivotal role in shaping TM practices within HEIs such as University XYZ by establishing strategic priorities and governing implementation frameworks. Participants suggested that the absence of clear TM standards may serve as a barrier to effective execution, potentially leading to inconsistencies, biases, and diminished stakeholder confidence. These findings align with literature indicating that undefined TM standards can hinder enforcement and contribute to organisational inefficiencies. Furthermore, participants' emphasis on aligning TM with institutional objectives underscores the potential importance of strategic TM in integrating talent initiatives with broader organisational goals. Leadership commitment also emerged as a critical factor, with participants indicating that strong management support may enhance TM effectiveness and talent retention. These findings suggest that institutions with well-defined policies and leadership-driven TM strategies are more likely to achieve consistency, fairness, and alignment with their long-term vision.

Beyond structural challenges, institutional policies may influence talent motivation and engagement by shaping career development opportunities, incentives, and work environments. Participants highlighted the perceived need for career planning, research incentives, well-being initiatives, and performance recognition as key motivators, aligning with literature that emphasises structured compensation and job clarity as drivers of employee satisfaction. However, participants extended this view by stressing holistic engagement strategies beyond traditional financial rewards. This perspective supports research highlighting career progression as potentially vital for long-term employee dedication and workplace well-being.

being as important for mitigating burnout. Additionally, participants' recognition of top performers aligns with findings that structured acknowledgment may strengthen morale and retention. These insights suggest that HEIs could benefit from integrating comprehensive engagement strategies that combine financial, career, and well-being incentives to sustain a motivated and committed workforce.

7.1.2 Question 2: What are the internal and external factors that facilitate and restrain the implementation of talent management policies and practices?

Theme 2: Facilitators and Barriers: Internal Factors in Implementing Talent Management Policies and Practices

Internal factors facilitating TM policy implementation.

Clear HR policies

Five participants highlighted the importance of well-defined TORs for each job title to ensure structured employee development. This perspective aligns with Collings et al. (2015), who highlight that strategic HRM integrates TM with organisational objectives, ensuring a systematic approach to TD. Similarly, Boxall and Purcell (2016) discuss how TORs provide clear role definitions and expectations, which support effective PM and succession planning.

Sparrow & Makram (2015) emphasise that strong recruitment strategies and targeted training are critical for HR departments to attract and develop talent in alignment with organisational needs. This aligns with participants' views on the significance of HR's role in recruitment, training, and PM. Rothwell and Kazanas (2014) further reinforce the importance of succession planning in identifying and preparing future leaders, ensuring long-term organisational stability. The participants' insights not only reflect existing literature but also highlight the interconnected nature of TORs, HR functions, and TM in driving organisational success.

Compensation and Incentives

Participants noted that competitive compensation packages, equitable work environments, and career advancement opportunities such as international study programmes are crucial for attracting and retaining talent. Budgetary support for salaries, promotions, and PD is vital for implementing TM policies effectively. These views support the findings of Milkovich and Newman (2016), who argue that competitive salaries play a crucial role in attracting skilled professionals. Similarly, Ferner and Quintanilla (2018) highlight that equitable work environments promote inclusivity and enhance employee satisfaction, which supports retention efforts.

Furthermore, participants' emphasis on career advancement aligns with Cappelli and Keller (2014), who assert that opportunities for growth, such as training and international exposure, attract ambitious individuals and strengthen organisational commitment. Additionally, the need for budgetary support for salaries, promotions, and PD reflects the findings of Bryson et al. (2019), who stress that financial investment in TM initiatives is critical to driving long-term organisational success.

Effective Communication

Participants discussed the role of effective communication in fostering stakeholder alignment and engagement. Leadership endorsement was also deemed essential, with top management setting the tone and motivating employees. This view corresponds with Sparrow, Brewster & Chung (2017), who argue that well-structured communication helps organisations convey TM strategies effectively, leading to greater acceptance and implementation. Similarly, Agarwal and Ferratt (2017) highlight that transparent messaging about TM objectives promotes collaboration, ultimately enhancing the success of such initiatives.

Additionally, participants stressed that leadership endorsement plays a crucial role in motivating employees and setting the tone for TD efforts. This perspective aligns with Thunnissen (2016a) and Boudreau and Ramstad (2017), who emphasise that leadership commitment fosters a supportive environment where TM initiatives can thrive. By reinforcing organisational priorities and providing direction, leaders create the conditions necessary for TM to succeed. This shows the interconnected role communication and leadership play in driving effective TM strategies and ensuring long-term organisational success.

Organisational Culture and Structure

Participants highlighted the impact of organisational culture and structure on TM success. Cultures that prioritise learning, diversity, and employee engagement foster effective TM, while flatter structures enhance adaptability and collaboration. This perspective is supported by Kyndt et al. (2019) and Sparrow et al. (2015), who highlight that learning-oriented cultures support continuous employee development, strengthening TM initiatives.

Participants also discussed the role of diversity and inclusion in enhancing creativity and employee retention, a view supported by Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen (2016), who argue that inclusive workplaces attract and sustain a diverse talent pool, driving innovation. Furthermore, participants pointed to the benefits of flatter organisational structures in promoting adaptability and collaboration. This is in line with Thunnissen (2016b), who notes that reduced hierarchy facilitates open communication, agility, and smoother TM policy implementation.

Performance Management Systems

Participants' perspectives reinforce the significance of robust PM systems in TM, aligning with insights from existing literature. Two participants identified robust PM systems as vital for recognising and nurturing talent. Their views reflect DeNisi and Murphy (2017), who argue that transparent, goal-oriented performance evaluations help align individual contributions with broader organisational objectives, strengthening TM effectiveness.

Beyond alignment, participants also highlighted the motivational aspect of recognising high-performing employees. This is consistent with George (2020), who asserts that acknowledging and rewarding top talent fosters a culture of excellence and continuous development. Additionally, the participants' emphasis on talent cultivation aligns with McDonnell et al. (2017), who stress that structured development opportunities are essential for preparing future leaders and ensuring a steady pipeline of skilled professionals. Together, these perspectives demonstrate that a well-designed PM system not only evaluates talent but also drives engagement, development, and long-term organisational success.

Resource allocation

The significance of resource allocation in TM was a key theme among participants, who highlighted the necessity of financial, human, and technological investments. Financial investment was particularly noted as essential for sustaining training and development initiatives. This view is supported by Collings et al. (2015), who argue that adequate funding enables organisations to implement effective learning programs, fostering employee growth and retention. Additionally, participants emphasised the need for skilled HR professionals to drive TM strategies, reflecting Boudreau and Ramstad's (2017) assertion that knowledgeable personnel are instrumental in executing TM effectively.

Beyond finance and HR, participants also stressed the importance of technological advancements in optimising TM processes. This aligns with Bondarouk and Brewster (2016), who advocate for the integration of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) to enhance efficiency, streamline recruitment, and improve decision-making. The findings illustrate how a well-balanced allocation of financial, personnel, and technological resources creates a strong foundation for successful TM implementation.

Training and development

Participants emphasised the critical role of training and development in nurturing a culture of continuous learning and professional growth. Three participants specifically pointed out that providing employees with structured learning opportunities enhances both individual capabilities and overall organisational competitiveness. This is supported by McDonnell et al. (2017) who argue that fostering a learning-oriented culture through consistent training initiatives strengthens employee engagement and long-term talent retention. Additionally, Noe (2017) highlights that targeted training ensures employees develop job-specific competencies, ultimately contributing to organisational success. These insights reinforced participants' views, illustrating that investment in training not only enriches the talent pool but also positions organisations for sustained growth in an evolving business landscape. By equipping employees with essential skills and fostering an environment that values continuous development, organisations can remain agile and competitive.

Internal factors restraining TM policy implementation.

TM is vital for aligning organisational objectives with employee capabilities, yet numerous internal barriers can hinder its implementation. This comparison examines insights from participants and existing literature, focusing on cultural barriers, inadequate compensation, lack of development opportunities, limited resources, market constraints, poor communication, employee engagement, HR practices, and work environments.

Cultural Barriers

Participants expressed concerns about organisational cultures that do not prioritise TD, diversity, and employee engagement, identifying these as major barriers to effective TM. One participant noted that such cultures negatively impact staff motivation and succession planning, another participant emphasised their restrictive effect on TM efforts. These perspectives align with existing literature, which highlights the consequences of failing to cultivate a supportive work environment.

Thunnissen (2016a) argues that when organisations do not actively invest in TD, employees feel undervalued, leading to reduced engagement and diminished TM effectiveness. Similarly, Al Ariss et al. (2014a) highlight that companies overlooking diversity initiatives struggle to attract and retain talent, ultimately limiting workforce performance and innovation. This further supports George (2020), who points out that a demotivated workforce is more likely to seek opportunities elsewhere, disrupting both retention strategies and succession planning.

By failing to create inclusive and development-focused cultures, organisations risk losing high-potential employees and weakening their talent pipelines. This challenge shows that there is a need for institutions to embed TD, diversity, and employee engagement within their core values to ensure long-term success in TM.

Inadequate Compensation

Participants identified inadequate compensation as another critical challenge in TM, emphasising its impact on both attracting and retaining skilled professionals. They highlighted that insufficient salary packages weaken an organisation's ability to compete in the job market, ultimately leading to talent shortages and increased turnover. This perspective is well-supported by existing research, which points out the pivotal role of competitive pay in effective TM strategies. Bryant and Allen (2013) argue that industries with high demand for skilled labour must offer attractive compensation to secure top talent. Shields et al. (2020) further elaborate on this issue, noting that organisations failing to provide competitive salaries risk losing experienced professionals to better-paying opportunities, intensifying the talent drain. Additionally, Collings et al. (2015) emphasise that well-structured compensation packages not only enhance employee satisfaction but also contribute to overall organisational performance, reinforcing their importance in TM frameworks.

Lack of Development

Participants expressed concerns about the lack of training, career progression, and skill enhancement opportunities, emphasising their impact on employee motivation and retention. They noted that when organisations fail to provide structured development pathways, employees may feel stagnant, leading to disengagement and increased turnover. The participants' sentiments support findings by Noe et al. (2017) who assert that employees experiencing career stagnation are more likely to seek opportunities elsewhere, diminishing an organisation's ability to retain high-performing talent. Similarly, Collings et al. (2015) emphasise that without clear advancement frameworks, organisations face challenges in developing future leaders and maintaining a competitive workforce. Thunnissen (2016b) and George (2020) further argue that fostering a culture of continuous learning and equitable career development not only enhances employee satisfaction but also strengthens adaptability and inclusion within the organisation. By investing in comprehensive training programs and well-defined career progression pathways, organisations can create an environment where employees feel valued and motivated.

Limited Resources

Participants highlighted budgetary and time constraints as major challenges affecting TM, particularly in relation to training, incentives, and overall workforce development. They pointed out that limited resources restrict investment in crucial TM initiatives, making it difficult for organisations to retain and develop top talent. These concerns support findings by Collings et al. (2015) who state that budgetary constraints hinder the implementation of comprehensive training and development programs, ultimately weakening an organisation's ability to build a skilled workforce. George (2020) further notes that inadequate incentives reduce employee retention, as competitive rewards play a crucial role in maintaining engagement and loyalty. Additionally, McDonnell et al. (2017) highlight the direct impact of financial limitations on skill development, suggesting that insufficient resources can prevent employees from acquiring the expertise necessary for career progression.

Market constraints

Participants highlighted market constraints as a significant challenge for TM, particularly pointing to inadequate marketing efforts and rapidly evolving industry demands. They stated that without strong branding and visibility, organisations struggle to attract a diverse pool of qualified candidates. Additionally, shifting market conditions require adaptive TM strategies to align workforce capabilities with emerging trends. The participants' concerns are supported by research, reinforcing the link between employer branding and recruitment success. Boxall and Purcell (2016) emphasise that organisations failing to actively promote their brand may face difficulties in attracting top talent, limiting their ability to compete in the job market. Similarly, Rinaldy, Pahira & Lativah (2023) stress that as market dynamics evolve, TM strategies must remain flexible to meet changing workforce demands effectively.

The participants' perspectives further validate Farndale et al. (2020) who highlight the challenges organisations face in sourcing skilled candidates, particularly in specialised or niche industries. This

suggests that without strategic marketing and proactive talent sourcing approaches, organisations risk talent shortages and decreased competitiveness. Institutions need to invest in strong employer branding, agile recruitment strategies, and market-responsive TM frameworks to attract and retain top talent in an increasingly dynamic landscape.

Poor communication

Participants highlighted ineffective communication at University XYZ as an obstacle to engagement in TM initiatives. They observed that unclear messaging leads to misunderstandings, reducing participation and limiting the effectiveness of TM strategies. When employees are not well-informed about TM opportunities, they may fail to see their value, weakening organisational commitment and retention efforts.

This concern echoes existing research, which emphasises the critical role of transparent communication in fostering engagement. Sparrow et al. (2017) argue that effective communication ensures employees understand the objectives and benefits of TM initiatives, increasing their willingness to participate. Without clear messaging, organisations risk disengagement and missed opportunities for TD.

Collings et al. (2015) further emphasise that open dialogue cultivates trust and inclusivity, making employees more receptive to TM strategies. By prioritising consistent and transparent communication, organisations can bridge the gap between TM policies and employee engagement, creating a culture where individuals feel informed, valued, and motivated to contribute to their professional growth. Dealing with communication challenges at University XYZ could enhance participation in TM programs and strengthen overall institutional effectiveness.

Low Employee Engagement and Morale

Participants identified low engagement and morale as challenges undermining TM efforts. They noted that disengaged employees are less likely to participate in TM initiatives, leading to higher turnover rates and reduced organisational stability. A lack of motivation within the workforce weakens commitment to long-term PD, making it difficult for organisations to cultivate and retain top talent. This concern is supported by literature; Bakker and Albrecht (2018) argue that engaged employees demonstrate greater commitment to organisational objectives, making them more receptive to TM strategies aimed at skill development and career progression. When engagement is high, employees are more likely to invest in their own growth, contributing to a more sustainable talent pipeline.

Conversely, research highlights the consequences of low morale on workforce retention. Robbins and Judge (2019) assert that disengagement contributes to higher turnover rates, resulting in increased recruitment costs and disruptions to TM strategies. Without proactive measures to boost morale, such as recognition programs, career development opportunities, and inclusive workplace cultures, organisations risk losing valuable talent.

Poor HR Practices and Support

Participants identified inconsistent HR practices and resistance to change as obstacles to effective TM. They observed that variations in HR approaches across departments created disparities in opportunities, fostering perceptions of unfairness. Additionally, reluctance to embrace new TM strategies hindered innovation and adaptation, limiting the effectiveness of workforce development efforts. Without a standardised approach, employees may struggle to see the value of TM initiatives, further reducing engagement and morale. This supports literature which highlights the need for consistency in HR policies to ensure fair and effective TM. Collings et al. (2015) argue that uniform HR practices promote equity, reduce perceptions of favouritism and enhance employee trust in TM processes. A lack of standardisation can lead to dissatisfaction, which weakens organisational commitment and retention efforts.

Resistance to change also poses significant challenges in implementing TM initiatives. Cascio and Boudreau (2016) emphasise that proactive CM is essential for overcoming reluctance and ensuring smooth transitions. Organisations that fail to address employee concerns and provide adequate support during TM shifts risk lower participation and higher attrition rates. By fostering a culture that values consistency and embraces change, organisations can create a more inclusive and adaptable TM framework that benefits both employees and long-term business objectives.

Unfavourable Work Environment

Participants identified excessive administrative and faculty workloads as a barrier to effective TM. They observed that balancing multiple responsibilities created stress and limited engagement with TM initiatives. A work environment that prioritises well-being and efficiency is considered essential for fostering participation and long-term success in TM efforts. Without strategies to alleviate workload pressures, employees may struggle to focus on professional growth and skill development. Gandolfi (2019) supports the participants' arguments and notes that there is a need for strategic task allocation to reduce stress and prevent burnout, ensuring that employees remain productive and engaged in TD programs. Overburdened staff often experience decreased motivation, which negatively impacts both individual career progression and overall organisational effectiveness.

A positive work environment also plays a crucial role in talent retention and engagement. Cameron and Spreitzer (2018) advocate for fostering collaboration and open communication as ways to create a supportive culture that encourages PD. Similarly, Golden and Veiga (2020) emphasise the benefits of flexible work arrangements, which not only enhance job satisfaction but also improve retention rates. By promoting efficiency and well-being, organisations can create an environment where employees are more inclined to engage with TM initiatives, leading to sustainable workforce growth.

Summary of Theme 2

The findings show that the implementation of TM policies and practices in institutions such as University XYZ is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors that may act as either facilitators or barriers. Internally, participants indicated that well-defined HR policies, competitive compensation structures, effective communication, organisational culture, robust PM systems, and resource allocation may play a significant role in facilitating TM strategies. Clear ToRs were perceived as contributing to structured employee development. Additionally, compensation and incentives such as competitive salaries and career advancement opportunities were suggested as important in attracting and retaining top talent. A culture focused on learning and efficient resource allocation, including financial and technological investments, were noted as factors potentially contributing to TM success.

Conversely, participants identified internal barriers such as cultural resistance, inadequate compensation, limited development opportunities, resource constraints, poor communication, and inconsistent HR practices as challenges to TM implementation. Institutions that do not prioritise TD and diversity were seen as potentially facing lower engagement and higher turnover rates. Inadequate compensation was perceived as weakening an institution's ability to compete for top talent, while a lack of career development pathways was associated with employee stagnation and attrition. Furthermore, inconsistent HR practices and resistance to change were suggested to contribute to disparities in TM opportunities, potentially reducing employee trust and participation.

Theme 3: Facilitators and Barriers: External Factors in Implementing Talent Management Policies and Practices

Competition

Eight participants discussed competition within academia and from non-traditional providers as a driving force behind innovative TM practices. They emphasised that HEIs must go beyond competitive salaries to attract and retain top talent. This perspective aligns with Balinda (2024), who argue that PD opportunities, mentorship programs, and a supportive institutional culture are critical for successful talent attraction and retention.

While participants focused on local competition, broader research expands this challenge to the international level. Jones et al. (2019) highlight the increasing need for HEIs to develop strategies that accommodate global mobility, including relocation support, cross-border collaboration, and diverse career pathways. The global academic job market requires institutions to not only recruit internationally but also create environments conducive to retaining diverse faculty and researchers.

Additionally, participants acknowledged the changing HE landscape but did not fully explore the implications of digital learning on TM. Youssef-Morgan and Stacey (2020) argue that the rise of online education challenges traditional HEIs by introducing flexible work arrangements, alternative teaching

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models, and new employment structures. As online and hybrid education models gain prominence, HEIs must adapt their talent strategies to attract educators who seek dynamic and technology-driven work environments. By integrating these evolving market forces into TM policies, institutions can enhance their ability to attract, develop, and retain academic talent in a highly competitive landscape.

Market Dynamics

Five participants noted market dynamics, such as economic stability and globalisation, as key influences. Regulatory frameworks also play a significant role, shaping compliance and resource allocation. This aligns with Deem et al. (2021), who emphasise the financial constraints imposed by economic uncertainty on workforce planning and development. Additionally, participants acknowledged the role of regulatory frameworks in shaping compliance requirements and guiding resource distribution, reflecting broader concerns about policy-driven constraints on TM execution.

Beyond economic and regulatory factors, participants mentioned the impact of cultural values on collaboration and innovation within organisations. They link inclusive and adaptive work environments to enhanced teamwork and creativity, reinforcing insights from Hofstede (2001) and Nørskov and Ulhøi (2020), who argue that cultural dimensions significantly influence workplace behaviour and knowledge-sharing practices. Participants further connected these cultural dynamics to talent retention, suggesting that a supportive and innovation-driven atmosphere fosters long-term employee commitment.

The discussion also pointed to the critical role of organisational culture in sustaining TD. Participants stressed the importance of continuous learning environments, mirroring Schein's (2017) assertion that deeply embedded cultural norms shape professional growth and adaptability. Organisations that prioritise structured learning opportunities and development-focused practices are better positioned to navigate market uncertainties while maintaining a skilled and motivated workforce.

Global Workforce Trends

Four participants highlighted global workforce trends as opportunities and challenges. They mentioned that diverse teams contribute to innovation and enriched academic discourse, a perspective reflected in Caligiuri et al. (2020) and Farndale et al. (2020), who link workplace diversity to enhanced problem-solving and institutional effectiveness. However, participants also noted that while diversity strengthens talent pipelines, it requires intentional policies to support integration and equity within organisations.

Another key challenge raised by participants was the complexity of managing expatriates, particularly in ensuring smooth transitions and sustained engagement. While they acknowledged the need for structured expatriate support systems, their discussion did not fully delve into the strategic frameworks required for effective implementation. Tarique and Schuler (2018) highlight the importance of well-designed expatriate programs that encompass cultural adaptation, career progression, and reintegration plans, aligning with concerns about talent mobility and retention in a globalised workforce.

Cost-of-living differences emerged as another critical factor influencing global TM strategies. Participants recognised the financial strain that disparities in living expenses impose on organisations and employees, though their insights remained broad. Stahl and Tung (2015) provide a more detailed perspective, advocating for compensation models that account for regional economic variations while maintaining competitiveness.

Challenges in Innovation and Development

Four participants identified bureaucratic hurdles and perceived unfairness as barriers to effective TM. They noted that rigid administrative processes often slow decision-making, creating barriers to TD and retention. This supports Anderson et al. (2014) and Piening et al. (2016), who argue that reducing bureaucracy and adopting agile HR practices fosters innovation and responsiveness. Participants acknowledged the need for structural reforms to enhance TM agility, reinforcing the importance of streamlined administrative frameworks.

Concerns about perceived unfairness were also prominent, with participants linking it to diminished trust and lower employee engagement. Their views reflect the findings of Van den Brink et al. (2018), who highlight the detrimental effects of inequitable practices on workforce morale and TM effectiveness. Participants called for transparent processes in recruitment, promotions, and performance evaluations, recognising the role of fairness in fostering commitment and retention.

The significance of organisational justice in shaping employee perceptions was further discussed. Colquitt et al. (2013) define justice in TM through distributive (fair outcomes), procedural (fair processes), and interactional (respectful treatment) dimensions, each of which influences employee motivation and loyalty. Participants' emphasis on the need for transparency and accountability in TM decision-making aligns with these principles, reinforcing the argument that fairness is integral to an effective and sustainable TM strategy.

Compensation

Three participants identified compensation as a critical factor in TM strategies, stressing the need for competitive packages to attract and retain talent. They point out that inadequate financial incentives weaken an organisation's ability to compete for top talent, reinforcing the need for well-structured compensation strategies. This perspective is in line with Bryant and Allen (2013), who assert that salaries, benefits, and performance-based rewards are essential for workforce stability. Participants further linked competitive pay to employee retention, echoing research that highlights financial incentives as a key driver of long-term commitment.

Beyond its role in recruitment and retention, compensation influences broader organisational dynamics. Shields et al. (2020) argue that well-designed pay structures enhance job satisfaction, reduce turnover, and strengthen employee engagement. Participants primarily focused on the immediate impact of

financial rewards, yet literature expands on how compensation shapes organisational culture and motivation. Shields et al. (2020) advocate for a holistic approach that integrates salary structures with career development, recognition, and work-life balance initiatives, fostering a more committed and satisfied workforce. Additionally, strategic compensation models go beyond fixed salaries to include performance-based incentives, equity-based rewards, and personalised benefits, ensuring alignment with employee expectations and industry standards. By considering these multidimensional aspects, institutions can create compensation frameworks that not only attract and retain talent but also enhance overall job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

Cultural and Societal Values

Participants stressed the influence of cultural and societal values on TM, particularly in fostering inclusivity and collaboration. They noted that organisational cultures that embrace diversity and respect societal norms create environments conducive to innovation and equitable TM. This perspective aligns with Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions theory, which highlights the need for culturally adaptive workplaces that accommodate diverse workstyles and values. Similarly, Nørskov and Ulhøi (2020) assert that inclusive environments drive collaboration, strengthening both employee engagement and organisational effectiveness.

Participants further linked societal values such as education and diversity to equitable TM practices, reinforcing the idea that organisations must integrate these principles into their policies to attract and retain top talent. Research by Roberson (2019) supports this view, demonstrating that inclusive talent strategies lead to higher employee satisfaction and stronger team cohesion. Schein (2017) also highlights that organisational culture, shaped by societal expectations, directly influences workforce adaptability and long-term success.

Beyond fostering inclusivity, participants suggested that aligning TM with societal values can enhance employer branding and workforce commitment. Companies that actively promote diversity and invest in education initiatives position themselves as attractive employers in competitive job markets. By embedding inclusivity into recruitment, development, and leadership strategies, organisations not only enhance innovation and collaboration but also ensure sustainable talent pipelines that reflect broader societal shifts.

Policies and regulations

Participants discussed how policies and regulations impact TM, particularly regarding compliance and resource allocation. They stated that rigid bureaucratic structures and time constraints often hinder the efficiency of TM initiatives, limiting the flexibility needed for strategic workforce planning. These concerns are reinforced by Deem et al. (2021) findings, which emphasise that regulatory frameworks directly shape institutional priorities, affecting how talent is managed and developed.

In addition to compliance challenges, participants noted that navigating complex administrative procedures slows down decision-making and reduces agility in TM implementation. Research supports these observations, as inefficient regulatory processes can create bottlenecks that hinder talent acquisition, career development, and workforce retention strategies.

Summary of Theme 3

From the findings, it is suggested that the implementation of TM policies and practices in institutions such as University XYZ is affected by a combination of internal and external factors, which may either facilitate or restrain their effectiveness. External facilitators, as identified by participants, include market competition, technological advancements, and globalisation, which may drive HEIs to adopt innovative TM strategies. Competitive pressures were perceived as encouraging institutions to offer more than just attractive salaries, incorporating mentorship programs, career development opportunities, and a strong organisational culture to attract and retain talent. Similarly, participants suggested that the integration of digital tools in recruitment and PM could enhance efficiency and decision-making, potentially reinforcing the role of data-driven approaches in talent identification and retention. Additionally, global workforce trends were seen as promoting diversity and cross-border collaborations, which may foster innovation and institutional effectiveness. However, these facilitators were also noted to introduce challenges, such as the need for structured expatriate support and adaptive compensation models that account for cost-of-living variations.

On the other hand, several external barriers were identified as potentially hindering the successful implementation of TM policies. Participants highlighted bureaucratic rigidity and perceived unfairness in administrative processes as factors that could slow down decision-making and reduce workforce engagement. While regulatory frameworks were acknowledged as necessary for compliance, they were also perceived as imposing constraints on workforce planning and development, which may limit institutional agility. Moreover, resistance to technological adoption among employees and managers was suggested to obstruct digital transformation efforts, indicating a need for structured CM initiatives. Compensation structures were also viewed as playing a critical role, with inadequate financial incentives potentially weakening an institution's ability to compete for top talent, despite the perceived benefits of performance-based and equity-driven rewards. Finally, cultural and societal values were seen as influencing TM strategies, with inclusive environments potentially fostering innovation and collaboration, while misalignment with societal expectations could reduce organisational appeal. Addressing these barriers through transparent, flexible, and culturally adaptive TM practices may help organisations enhance their talent attraction and retention capabilities.

7.1.3 Question 3: What processes and criteria are used to identify, develop, and retain talent within the institution, and how effective are these processes?

Theme 4: Evaluating Talent: Processes and Effectiveness in Identification, Development, and Retention

Performance evaluation

Participants highlighted performance evaluations as foundational to TM, enabling a thorough assessment of employee performance and areas requiring development. They viewed structured evaluations as a means of providing constructive feedback, recognising achievements, and aligning training opportunities with individual and organisational needs. Additionally, they stressed the value of incorporating employee input to enhance engagement and ensure that development initiatives remain relevant.

These perspectives support existing research. DeNisi and Murphy (2017) affirm that comprehensive evaluations are instrumental in identifying high-potential employees, shaping succession planning, and addressing competency gaps. Armstrong and Taylor (2020) further highlight that performance reviews offering meaningful feedback promote a culture of continuous learning, ultimately enhancing employee motivation and commitment. Moreover, Garavan et al. (2019b) advocate for participatory evaluation processes, arguing that involving employees strengthens the alignment between TM strategies and broader organisational objectives.

By combining structured performance assessments with employee-driven insights, institutions can create a more responsive and effective TM framework. Ensuring that evaluations not only measure past performance but also serve as a developmental tool can enhance workforce capability, support long-term career growth, and contribute to sustained organisational success.

Awareness and Connection

Participants pointed out the importance of organisational awareness, particularly the ability of leaders to understand employees' strengths, weaknesses, and developmental needs. Participants highlighted that fostering strong internal connections within departments enhances personalised support, ensuring that TM strategies align with institutional objectives. By cultivating a deeper understanding of their workforce, leaders can create targeted development opportunities that drive both individual and collective success. These insights align with existing literature. Cao and Xiang (2018) affirm that social networks within organisations facilitate knowledge sharing, ultimately strengthening the alignment between TM initiatives and institutional goals. Similarly, Collings et al. (2019) highlight that leaders who actively engage with their teams can provide tailored development pathways, optimising talent potential and organisational performance. Garavan et al. (2019a) further reinforce that personalised guidance not only nurtures individual growth but also ensures that employee aspirations align with broader institutional needs.

Developing organisational awareness through active leadership engagement and department-wide connectivity enhances TM effectiveness. When leaders proactively understand and support their employees, they create an environment conducive to continuous learning, career advancement, and long-term institutional success.

Organisational Culture

Participants identified organisational culture as a critical factor in TM practices, particularly the emphasis on collaboration, learning, and leveraging individual strengths. A culture that encourages continuous learning and innovation enhances TM outcomes. This resonates with existing literature emphasising the role of culture in shaping effective TM practices. Kyndt et al. (2019) argue that learning-focused cultures foster employee engagement and continuous skill enhancement. Similarly, Garavan et al. (2019b) highlight that collaborative environments boost creativity and innovation, essential for identifying and nurturing talent. Silva and Huarng (2019) discuss the importance of recognising individual strengths to align TM practices with employees' aspirations, driving motivation and productivity.

External Factors and Policies

Three participants noted that external factors, including government policies such as "Kuwaitisation," significantly influence TM in HEIs. These policies require institutions to align their recruitment, retention, and career development initiatives with national regulatory frameworks, influencing workforce composition and long-term talent planning. The emphasis on local talent necessitates strategic adaptations to ensure both compliance and institutional sustainability. The views expressed by the participants resonate with findings from the literature, highlighting the broader implications of localisation policies on TM. Al Ariss et al. (2014a) explain that such policies drive organisations to prioritise national talent, fundamentally altering recruitment and development strategies. Similarly, Tarique and Schuler (2018) discuss how affirmative action and diversity initiatives shape TM by fostering equitable opportunities while ensuring institutional alignment with national employment objectives. In response, HEIs must design targeted programmes that not only attract and retain local professionals but also sustain diversity and academic excellence.

To navigate these regulatory requirements effectively, HEIs need adaptive TM frameworks that balance national employment priorities with institutional goals. Developing structured career pathways for local talent while maintaining inclusivity enables HEIs to comply with government mandates without compromising workforce diversity or academic competitiveness.

Resource Management and Funding

Participants stressed that resource management and funding are critical for TM success. Adequate funding enables institutions to offer competitive salaries, implement robust training programmes, and

establish career development pathways, key factors in attracting and retaining high-performing talent. According to the participants, without sufficient financial support, TM initiatives risk being underdeveloped, limiting institutional capacity to build and sustain a skilled workforce.

Existing literature is reinforced by these insights by illustrating the direct impact of financial resources on TM outcomes. Collings et al. (2019) assert that well-funded TM strategies facilitate the implementation of competitive compensation structures and employee benefits, which are critical for talent retention. Similarly, Bryant and Allen (2013) discuss how competitive remuneration enhances an organisation's ability to attract high-calibre professionals, positioning HEIs as employers of choice. Beyond compensation, Sparrow et al. (2015) emphasise the need for strategic resource allocation to sustain retention efforts, ensuring that financial investments contribute to long-term institutional stability.

Effective TM, therefore, requires a balance between resource availability and strategic financial planning. Institutions that prioritise structured investment in workforce development can cultivate a sustainable talent pipeline, mitigate turnover, and reinforce their competitive standing in the sector.

Education and Programme Development

Participants emphasised the importance of addressing skill gaps through educational initiatives, faculty development, and feedback mechanisms. They identified mentorship and competency frameworks as key approaches to enhancing skills in a targeted manner, ensuring that employees remain adaptable and aligned with institutional needs. The literature supports these perspectives by demonstrating how proactive skill development strategies contribute to a capable and competitive workforce. Thunnissen (2016a) highlights the importance of systematically identifying and addressing skill deficiencies to enhance workforce readiness. Faculty development plays a crucial role in strengthening teaching effectiveness, research output, and industry collaboration (Frost & Taylor, 2016), equipping employees with the expertise needed to excel in their roles. Similarly, Hartwell and Yuen (2018) advocate for structured feedback systems that provide insights into skill gaps, guiding tailored development efforts. Mentorship also emerges as a vital mechanism for knowledge transfer and professional growth, with Egan and Yang (2015) emphasising its role in fostering expertise and career progression. Furthermore, competency frameworks help standardise skill development efforts, ensuring alignment with institutional objectives and long-term strategic goals.

Through the application of these approaches, institutions can cultivate a high-performing workforce capable of adapting to evolving demands. Strategic investments in mentorship, faculty development, and competency-based training ensure not only individual success but also institutional resilience in an increasingly competitive landscape.

Leadership and Organisational Structure

Participants discussed the importance of aligning TM with organisational strategy, identifying critical roles, and evaluating leadership support. They also highlighted the value of cost-benefit analyses in evaluating the efficiency of TM initiatives and ensuring optimal resource allocation. These views are in line with findings from the literature. Iles et al. (2019) assert that prioritising key positions allows organisations to concentrate resources where they yield the greatest impact, improving overall performance and competitiveness. Senior leadership commitment plays a crucial role in shaping a talent-focused culture, as highlighted by Macey et al. (2011), who emphasise the importance of executive engagement in providing resources and fostering an environment conducive to talent growth. Additionally, Dowling et al. (2017) advocate for data-driven cost-benefit analyses to ensure TM investments align with strategic priorities, enabling organisations to measure outcomes and effectively refine their approaches effectively.

Institutions can use these ideas to develop a more structured and results-oriented TM framework. Strategic role identification, leadership involvement, and financial assessment mechanisms collectively contribute to a more sustainable and impactful TM strategy, driving organisational success.

Talent Monitoring evaluation

Participants emphasised ongoing talent monitoring and evaluation as crucial for adapting TM strategies. Participants stressed the role of performance appraisals, structured feedback mechanisms, and cultural alignment in maintaining a dynamic and responsive TM framework. Pulakos et al. (2015) emphasise that performance reviews are essential for identifying strengths, addressing areas for development, and recognising high performers. Similarly, Noe et al. (2017) discuss the importance of training assessments in bridging skill gaps and ensuring that employees are equipped to meet evolving organisational needs. Becker and Huselid (2019) further advocate for continuous feedback loops, which allow organisations to make data-driven adjustments to TM strategies. Additionally, Schein (2016) highlights the significance of cultural alignment, noting that TM efforts must be integrated with organisational values to promote a cohesive and engaged workforce. The above findings from existing research are supported by the views from participants.

Summary of Theme 4

Participants suggested that factors such as organisational culture, leadership engagement, and structured performance evaluation processes may play a role in talent identification, development, and retention in institutions such as University XYZ. A strong learning culture was perceived as fostering continuous professional growth, while active leadership involvement was seen as potentially ensuring that TM strategies align with institutional goals. Furthermore, performance evaluation mechanisms, including structured feedback and participatory assessments, were identified as contributing to employee motivation and career progression. However, internal challenges such as bureaucratic rigidity, limited

resource allocation, and inconsistent adoption of digital tools were noted as potential obstacles that could hinder TM efforts by reducing flexibility and slowing decision-making processes.

Externally, participants indicated that market competition, technological advancements, and government policies might significantly impact TM implementation. HEIs were described as facing increasing pressure from both local and international competitors, which could require them to go beyond salary-based incentives by offering career development opportunities and fostering an inclusive work environment. Technological advancements were viewed as enabling data-driven decision-making and streamlined HR practices, though they were also noted as facing resistance from employees unwilling to adapt to new digital systems. Additionally, policies such as workforce nationalisation (e.g., Kuwaitisation) were seen as necessitating strategic adjustments in recruitment and career progression frameworks to balance compliance with diversity and institutional excellence. To navigate these challenges effectively, participants suggested that HEIs may benefit from adopting dynamic TM frameworks that integrate resource planning, structured leadership support, and continuous monitoring to enhance their ability to attract, develop, and retain top talent.

7.1.4 Question 4: How do organisational stakeholders, including faculty and administrative staff, perceive and contribute to talent management practices?

Theme 5: Influential Stakeholders in Talent Management Implementation

Alumni Contributions: Financial Support, Mentorship, and Reputation Building

Participants identified alumni associations as key stakeholders in TM, highlighting their contributions through financial support, networking, and mentorship. Their contributions help enrich the talent pool, offering guidance to students and early-career professionals. Research by Kim et al. (2020), Jones and Schuh (2017), and Jyoti & Sharma (2015) highlights the impact of alumni financial contributions and career guidance in fostering career development and retention. Additionally, alumni engagement enhances the institution's reputation, making it more attractive to top talent (Johnson & Lee, 2018). Saqr et al. (2023) further emphasise the long-term benefits of alumni involvement in sustaining TM outcomes.

HR and Departmental Leadership in Recruitment and Talent Development

HR departments and HoDs are instrumental in shaping recruitment, training, and succession planning processes, which directly impact the institution's talent pool. HR ensures that recruitment aligns with institutional goals, while HoDs facilitate leadership development and talent retention within their departments. Research by Garg & Van Weele (2020) and Boxall & Wood (2016) supports the essential role of HR in aligning TM strategies with broader institutional objectives. Collins and Smith (2018), as well as Cascio and Aguinis (2018), highlight the significance of HoDs in fostering a culture of TD within their respective departments.

Faculty Engagement in Professional Development and Continuous Improvement

Nine participants indicated that administrators and faculty are central stakeholders in TM. Their involvement ensures that employees receive targeted training, leading to higher engagement and retention. Studies by Hussain et al. (2021) and Allen & Mayfield (2019) underscore the importance of faculty participation in designing and implementing development programs that support institutional goals. Additionally, Becker et al. (2017) note that faculty feedback plays a key role in refining TM practices, ensuring their continuous improvement and relevance to organisational needs.

Government and Regulatory Bodies: Standards and Funding for Talent Development

Six participants emphasised the influence of government agencies and regulatory bodies on TM practices, noting that they establish educational standards and provide funding, both of which shape TM strategies. These entities shape recruitment strategies, development programs, and adherence to quality standards. Deem et al. (2021) and Hazelkorn (2018) emphasise how government regulations drive the adoption of TM practices, ensuring compliance with faculty qualifications and DEI policies. Additionally, Brennan et al. (2020) highlight the role of government funding in sustaining TM initiatives by enabling institutions to offer competitive compensation and development opportunities.

Student Engagement in Talent Management through Feedback and Program Customisation

Eight participants highlighted the role of students as significant stakeholders in TM. Students are key stakeholders in TM, as their feedback helps shape academic and PD programs. By actively participating in surveys and focus groups, students contribute to refining TM strategies to better meet their needs. Research by Osman et al. (2020), Souto-Otero & Enders (2020), and Simons et al. (2017) emphasises the value of student input in improving learning outcomes and engagement. Institutions that integrate student perspectives into their TM practices enhance the overall educational experience and increase student satisfaction.

Summary of Theme 5

The findings of this study reveal that stakeholders within the organisation perceive and contribute to TM practices in diverse and interconnected ways, potentially influencing recruitment, development, and retention strategies. Participants suggested that alumni may play a role by providing financial support, mentorship, and networking opportunities, which could enhance institutional reputation and career development prospects. HR departments and HoDs were seen as facilitating recruitment, training, and succession planning, with the potential to align TM with institutional objectives and department-specific needs. Faculty members were perceived as contributing through PD initiatives, mentoring, and continuous feedback, which may enhance employee engagement and institutional effectiveness.

Additionally, government and regulatory bodies were identified as influencing TM through policy enforcement, funding allocation, and the establishment of academic and professional standards, which may help ensure compliance with national and international best practices. Participants also highlighted the role of students as key stakeholders, suggesting that their feedback may contribute to shaping learning and development programs to better align with evolving educational and industry demands. Collectively, these stakeholders were described as shaping a dynamic TM ecosystem, where collaboration can foster sustainable talent growth, institutional competitiveness, and long-term success.

7.2 Contributions to Theory

This study makes a theoretical contribution by employing a dual theoretical framework that integrates institutional theory and stakeholder theory to analyse TM practices in HEIs. This approach offers a nuanced understanding of TM processes and challenges, particularly in the context of a Kuwaiti HEI. While some existing studies have integrated multiple theoretical frameworks in TM research, many still predominantly rely on a single lens. This research builds on prior work by systematically combining these frameworks to offer a more comprehensive perspective.

7.2.1 Advancing Institutional Theory

Institutional theory emphasises how organisational practices are influenced by formal structures, cultural norms, and regulatory environments (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). This study extends this framework by examining how the unique institutional vision and policies of University XYZ shape TM practices. Findings demonstrate that the absence of standardised governing frameworks creates inconsistencies, biases, and diminished stakeholder confidence. This insight builds on Sparrow et al.'s (2015) assertion that undefined standards hinder TM enforcement, adding a cultural and organisational specificity often missing in global studies.

The integration of institutional theory sheds light on the challenges posed by conflicting cultural norms and regulatory expectations, particularly in the context of “Kuwaitisation” policies. Unlike prior studies that primarily focus on Western contexts (e.g., Cappelli & Keller, 2017; Collings et al., 2019), this research highlights how sociocultural and economic factors in Kuwait necessitate tailored TM strategies. For instance, aligning TM practices with local cultural values, such as the emphasis on inclusivity and community collaboration, underscores the importance of contextual adaptability, an area previously underexplored in institutional theory.

7.2.2 Advancing Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory, which prioritises the interests and influences of various organisational stakeholders, is enriched by this study through its detailed exploration of the roles and perceptions of diverse actors,

including alumni, government agencies, and student representatives. While prior research has established that stakeholders play a critical role in TM (Freeman, 1984; Thunnissen, 2016), studies often focus on primary stakeholders such as employers and employees, overlooking the contributions of external factors such as policymakers, funding bodies, and academic networks (Collings et al., 2019). By identifying stakeholders' contributions to TM, ranging from financial support and mentorship to regulatory compliance, this research demonstrates the multi-layered nature of TM governance. For instance, alumni provide career development support, government agencies influence workforce policies, and student representatives advocate for inclusive recruitment and retention strategies. This nuanced perspective reveals the complex interplay between internal and external forces shaping TM effectiveness, reinforcing the need for stakeholder-inclusive TM strategies that align institutional goals with broader societal and economic imperatives (Tarique & Schuler, 2018). While previous studies by researchers such as Collings et al. (2019) and Thunnissen (2016) discuss the role of stakeholders in general terms, this study builds on their work by offering a more detailed, action-specific analysis of stakeholder influence. By examining concrete stakeholder actions and their direct effects on recruitment, retention, and development, this research provides a nuanced understanding that goes beyond overarching stakeholder roles. Alumni associations emerge not only as financial contributors but also as reputation-builders, influencing the university's ability to attract top talent. Similarly, the regulatory frameworks imposed by government agencies reveal how policy alignment becomes both a facilitator and a barrier to effective TM, particularly under the constraints of budgetary limitations.

7.2.3 Theoretical Integration

The dual theoretical framework of institutional and stakeholder theories offers a comprehensive perspective on TM practices. Institutional theory highlights the structural and cultural constraints that shape organisational behaviour, while stakeholder theory sheds light on the relational dynamics that influence TM outcomes. The combination of these frameworks allows for a more nuanced understanding of how organisational objectives align or fail to align with stakeholder expectations, thereby informing more effective and actionable TM strategies.

Existing research has explored TM through these theories, but often in isolation. Studies that apply institutional theory alone, such as Boxall and Purcell (2016) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983), primarily focus on how formal structures, regulatory pressures, and cultural norms shape TM practices. While these studies provide valuable insights into the broader institutional constraints, they often overlook the agency of stakeholders and the dynamic interactions that influence TM implementation.

Conversely, research that employs stakeholder theory in isolation, such as Thunnissen (2016b) and Freeman et al. (2010), emphasises the roles and expectations of various actors—such as employees, managers, and policymakers—but often neglects how institutional constraints limit or enable stakeholder

influence. These studies offer valuable discussions on engagement and participation but provide little insight into how organisational structures shape and sometimes restrict stakeholder agency in TM.

This study bridges these gaps by integrating both theories, offering a more holistic and actionable understanding of TM. Unlike previous research that examines either institutional rigidity or stakeholder relationships in isolation, this study demonstrates how institutional, and stakeholder dynamics interact to shape TM outcomes. For instance, it identifies how institutional policies sometimes conflict with workforce agility, while stakeholder expectations for engagement remain unmet due to bureaucratic constraints. Institutional theory explains the rigidity of formal structures, while stakeholder theory contextualises these challenges within employees lived experiences, illustrating the need for adaptive leadership and inclusive decision-making.

Furthermore, this integrated framework is particularly valuable for studying TM in non-Western contexts, where cultural and societal influences play a more pronounced role in shaping both institutional policies and stakeholder expectations. While previous research has primarily examined TM in Western HEIs (e.g., Collings et al., 2019; Sparrow et al., 2015), this study expands the discussion by demonstrating how institutional-stakeholder interactions manifest in diverse cultural settings, providing context-sensitive insights into TM practices.

By capturing the interplay between institutional structures and stakeholder dynamics, this research advances TM theory and offers practical guidance for HEIs seeking to navigate regulatory constraints while fostering stakeholder engagement. This dual-theory approach not only enriches academic discourse but also provides a more actionable framework for improving TM strategies in complex institutional environments.

7.3 Insights from the Framework

The study's dual framework has provided several insights, including:

7.3.1 Cultural Specificity in TM Practices

Unlike studies that generalise TM strategies across global contexts, this research highlights the critical role of cultural nuances, such as collectivist values and the societal emphasis on family and community in Kuwait. These factors necessitate TM strategies that prioritise work-life balance, inclusivity, and employee well-being, aligning with cultural expectations.

7.3.2 Stakeholder-Driven Adaptability

The findings reveal that stakeholder engagement, such as HODs, alumni and government agencies, is pivotal for aligning TM practices with both organisational and societal goals. This insight expands

stakeholder theory by illustrating how external pressures (e.g., localization policies) interact with internal priorities, necessitating a dynamic and adaptive approach to TM.

7.3.3 Integration of Workforce Agility

While institutional theory has traditionally focused on organisational structures, this study highlights the need to incorporate workforce agility into its framework. The emphasis on employee adaptability and critical thinking aligns with contemporary workforce demands, offering a novel dimension to institutional analysis.

7.3.4 Innovative Recruitment Strategies

By addressing the growing importance of remote work, diversity, and global talent pools, this study identifies innovative recruitment strategies that align with both stakeholder expectations and institutional goals. This finding broadens the application of both theories to include modern workforce trends.

7.3.5 Contributions to Institutional Theory

This study advances institutional theory by demonstrating how formal structures, regulatory frameworks, and cultural norms shape TM practices while also interacting with stakeholder dynamics. Unlike prior research that primarily examines institutional constraints in isolation (e.g., Boxall & Purcell, 2016; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), this study highlights the misalignment between institutional policies and workforce agility, showing how rigid bureaucratic structures hinder adaptive TM strategies. By integrating stakeholder perspectives, the research offers a more dynamic understanding of institutional theory, illustrating how employees, policymakers, and organisational leaders negotiate institutional constraints to influence TM outcomes. This contribution is particularly relevant in non-Western contexts, where societal values and localisation policies, such as Kuwaitisation, add layers of institutional complexity. By bridging institutional rigidity with stakeholder agency, this study expands institutional theory's applicability beyond Western-centric frameworks, offering a context-sensitive perspective that accounts for cultural and policy-driven variations in TM implementation.

7.4 Limitations and Areas for Future Research

7.4.1 Limitations

While this study has made contributions to the understanding of TM within University XYZ in Kuwait, it is not without its limitations. These limitations provide valuable directions for future research to further explore and refine the findings presented here.

Firstly, this study is confined to a single HEI, University XYZ, within the Kuwaiti context. While the findings offer insights into TM practices within this institution, the results are not fully generalisable to other HEIs

in Kuwait or the broader Middle East. The cultural and organisational characteristics of different institutions could influence the application of TM practices, suggesting that future studies should explore a broader range of institutions across the region to validate and extend the findings.

Second, this study focused primarily on qualitative data gathered through interviews with key stakeholders, such as university administrators and faculty members. While this approach provides rich, detailed insights, it is limited by the subjective nature of the data and potential biases from the participants. Future research could benefit from incorporating quantitative methods, such as surveys, to gather a more diverse set of perspectives and to facilitate the testing of the theoretical framework on a larger scale.

Finally, this study does not deeply explore the long-term impacts of TM practices on the retention and development of talent. Future research could follow a longitudinal design to assess the long-term effects of TM strategies on talent retention and organisational outcomes, providing further insights into the sustainability of these practices.

7.4.2 Areas for Future Research

7.4.2.1 Cross-Institutional Comparisons

Future studies should compare TM practices across multiple HEIs in Kuwait and the Middle East to understand how different institutions adapt to external pressures and internal dynamics. This will allow for a broader generalisation of findings and enhance the understanding of context-specific factors influencing TM.

7.4.2.2 Impact of TM Practices on Employee Retention

Research that follows a longitudinal approach to examine the long-term impact of TM practices on employee retention and career progression would offer valuable insights into the sustainability of TM strategies.

7.4.2.3 Integration of Quantitative Methods

Further studies could incorporate quantitative approaches, such as surveys, to complement the qualitative data and provide a more comprehensive understanding of TM practices across various stakeholders.

7.4.2.4 Exploring the Role of Technology in Talent Management

Given the growing role of technology in organisational management, future research could explore how digital tools and platforms are being utilised to enhance TM practices in HEIs, particularly in terms of recruitment, training, and employee engagement.

7.5 Contributions to Practice

This study makes several important contributions to practice, particularly for University XYZ and other HEIs in Kuwait seeking to improve their TM practices. By leveraging a dual theoretical framework combining Institutional Theory and Stakeholder Theory, the research offers both a broad theoretical understanding and actionable recommendations for real-world applications.

7.5.1 Refining Talent Identification and Recruitment Strategies

One of the key findings of this study is the need for more structured and systematic approaches to talent identification and recruitment within University XYZ. The institution currently faces challenges in attracting top talent, particularly in specialised academic fields. Drawing from the insights provided by the theoretical framework, the university should consider developing more robust recruitment strategies that go beyond traditional methods. This could involve leveraging digital platforms and social media to broaden the talent pool, as well as forging strategic partnerships with local and international institutions to attract high-quality candidates. Additionally, aligning recruitment strategies with the university's mission and values will ensure that the selected talent fits not only the academic requirements but also the institution's broader vision, enhancing long-term retention and engagement.

7.5.2 Strengthening Employee Engagement and Development

A contribution from this research is the identification of gaps in current employee engagement and development practices at University XYZ. While the institution has some ongoing PD programs, these initiatives are often fragmented and not sufficiently tailored to the specific needs of its faculty and staff. Based on this study's findings, the university can implement a more comprehensive and personalised approach to TD. This includes offering continuous training programs, leadership development opportunities, and mentorship schemes that align with both the career aspirations of staff and the university's strategic goals. Additionally, incorporating feedback loops and regular performance reviews will allow for a more dynamic and responsive approach to employee development.

7.5.3 Enhancing Retention Strategies through an Improved Work Environment

The research also highlights that the current work environment at University XYZ could benefit from improvements in organisational culture, leadership support, and work-life balance initiatives. These factors have a direct impact on employee retention and job satisfaction. As part of its strategy to improve retention, the university should focus on creating a more supportive and inclusive work environment that fosters collaboration and open communication between management and staff. This could include enhancing leadership training to ensure that managers are equipped with the skills to support and motivate their teams. Furthermore, offering flexible working arrangements and initiatives to support the well-being of staff could contribute to higher levels of job satisfaction and retention.

7.5.4 Aligning Talent Management with Institutional Vision and Strategic Goals

This study emphasises the importance of aligning TM practices with the broader institutional vision and national goals, such as the Kuwaitisation initiative. For University XYZ, more clearly articulating the institution's TM objectives in relation to national workforce development strategies could strengthen this alignment. This includes setting specific TM goals that support the university's academic and research objectives and ensuring that TM practices contribute to the broader societal aims of Kuwait. Additionally, University XYZ should collaborate closely with key external stakeholders, including government bodies, to ensure that its TM strategies are responsive to changes in the national and regional labour markets.

7.5.5 Continuous Evaluation and Adaptation of Talent Management Practices

Finally, this study recommends that University XYZ implements a continuous evaluation framework for its TM practices to ensure that they remain relevant and effective over time. Regular monitoring and assessment of the impact of TM strategies on institutional performance, staff satisfaction, and retention rates will allow the university to make data-driven decisions and adjust practices as needed. This can be achieved through the establishment of clear performance metrics and periodic reviews of TM strategies, ensuring that they align with evolving institutional and national goals.

7.6 Academic Talent Management vs. Administration Talent Management

In the context of this research, a notable distinction emerged between the management of academic talent and administrative talent at University XYZ. While both categories of talent are critical to the functioning of the institution, the strategies and practices employed to manage these two groups differ significantly. Academic TM is focused primarily on attracting highly qualified faculty members, supporting their PD through research grants and academic training, and fostering an environment conducive to teaching and scholarly activities. In contrast, the administration of TM more centered around operational efficiency, with an emphasis on administrative staff skills, leadership in support services, and the integration of technology to enhance institutional management. This research revealed that academic TM was often more focused on long-term development, involving extensive career pathways and opportunities for research collaborations, whereas administrative TM involved more immediate concerns such as enhancing procedural efficiency, staff retention, and streamlining support services. This distinction emphasises the importance of strategies that address the specific needs of both academic and administrative staff, ensuring that each group is managed appropriately according to their roles and contributions to the university's objectives.

7.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the two research questions, along with the four sub-research questions, are answered and synthesised based on the data collected from the participants at University XYZ. By structuring the analysis

around the research questions, this study effectively explores the various aspects of TM within HEIs, specifically at University XYZ. Furthermore, by connecting these findings to the broader literature on TM in academia, this research extends the scholarly discourse and contributes valuable insights to the field. Overall, Chapter Seven underlines the significance of this study's findings and their implications for both theory and practice in TM within the context of HEIs.

The implications of the findings and how they can be used to incorporate TM in practice into HEIs will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Contributions to Theory and Practice

8.0 Introduction to the chapter

The primary aim of this study was to explore TM practices within the HEI context of University XYZ in Kuwait, and its possible more general applications. This research specifically sought to understand how these practices are implemented and evaluated, as well as the internal and external factors influencing their effectiveness. It also considered the perceptions and contributions of stakeholders in shaping TM strategies. In this chapter, the research objectives are revisited, and the key findings are synthesised before presenting the overarching conclusions drawn from this study.

8.1 Research Questions

8.1.1 Central Research Question

RQ1: How are talent management practices implemented and evaluated in a higher educational institution in Kuwait?

RQ2: What are the key influencing factors impacting talent management practices in a higher educational institution in Kuwait?

8.1.2 Sub-Research Questions

SRQ1: How do institutional vision and policies influence talent management practices in higher educational institutions?

SRQ2: What are the internal and external factors that facilitate and restrain the implementation of talent management policies and practices?

SRQ3: What processes and criteria are used to identify, develop, and retain talent within the institution, and how effective are these processes?

SRQ4: How do organisational stakeholders, including faculty and administrative staff, perceive and contribute to talent management practices?

This research utilises a qualitative single-case study design to explore the implementation and evaluation of TM practices at University XYZ in Kuwait. The study's population comprises nine faculty members, nine administrators, and seven students, with purposive sampling employed to select participants who are knowledgeable and can provide rich insights into the TM practices. Data was collected through virtual interviews using Microsoft Teams for both online and in-person interviews and followed by transcription and coding of responses. Thematic analysis, based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach, was applied to analyse the data, with the support of NVivo™ version fourteen software.

8.2 Key Findings

8.2.1 Implementation and Evaluation of Talent Management Practices

This study revealed that University XYZ employs a variety of TM strategies, though their implementation is often inconsistent. A major finding was the absence of clear and standardised governing frameworks for TM, which creates challenges such as biases, inefficiencies, and reduced stakeholder confidence. The lack of alignment between institutional goals and TM practices was a recurring theme, underscoring the need for strategic planning and leadership support.

The evaluation mechanisms for TM were also found to be underdeveloped. While performance reviews and feedback systems exist, their application is inconsistent and fails to effectively capture individual and organisational progress. Participants emphasised the importance of systematic assessment processes to ensure alignment with institutional objectives and to foster employee growth.

8.2.2 Internal and External Influences of Talent Management

This study identified a range of internal and external factors that shape TM practices at University XYZ:

8.2.2.1 Internal Factors

Leadership support, organisational culture, resource allocation, and employee engagement emerged as critical internal influences. Participants highlighted gaps in career development opportunities, inconsistent compensation structures, and inadequate training programs. These deficiencies hinder the institution's ability to attract, develop, and retain top talent.

8.2.2.2 External Factors

Regulatory frameworks, particularly the "Kuwaitisation" policy, play a significant role in shaping TM strategies. While these policies aim to promote local workforce development, they also impose constraints on hiring and retention practices. Economic stability, market competition, and technological advancements were additional external influences identified by participants.

8.2.3 Processes and Criteria for Talent Identification, Development, and Retention

University XYZ employs a variety of processes for talent identification, including performance evaluations and recruitment initiatives. However, this study found that these processes often lack transparency and consistency. Participants stressed the need for structured talent pipelines and leadership succession planning to ensure organisational continuity.

In terms of TD, the findings highlighted gaps in professional training and mentorship opportunities. While some initiatives exist, they are often fragmented and fail to address the specific needs of employees. Retention efforts were similarly found to be insufficient, with participants citing issues such as limited work-life balance initiatives and outdated compensation systems as key challenges.

8.2.4 Stakeholder Perceptions and Contributions

This study highlighted the pivotal role of stakeholders in shaping TM practices. Administrators and faculty members emphasised the importance of clear communication and collaboration in fostering a cohesive approach to TM. Alumni associations, government agencies, and student organisations were also identified as influential stakeholders whose contributions could enhance recruitment, development, and retention strategies.

However, the findings revealed a disconnection between stakeholders' perceptions and the actual implementation of TM practices. Participants called for greater stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes to ensure that TM strategies align with the needs and aspirations of the university community.

8.3 Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive examination of TM practices within the HEI context of University XYZ in Kuwait, offering valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with managing academic talent more generally. Several key learning conclusions can be drawn from the research, which should be adopted by the institution and might be useful for other HEIs:

8.3.1 The Need for Strategic Alignment

Effective TM requires a clear alignment between institutional goals, cultural values, and employee aspirations. University XYZ must prioritise the development of standardised frameworks that integrate these elements to enhance the consistency and effectiveness of TM practices.

8.3.2 Addressing Internal Gaps

Organisational culture, leadership support, and resource allocation are critical to successful TM. Addressing gaps in career development, compensation, and employee engagement will enable the institution to build a more motivated and capable workforce.

8.3.3 Navigating External Pressures

While external factors such as regulatory frameworks and market dynamics present challenges, they also offer opportunities for innovation. University XYZ can leverage these pressures to develop adaptive and progressive TM strategies.

8.3.4 Enhancing Stakeholder Collaboration

Building stronger relationships with internal and external stakeholders is essential for creating a participatory and collaborative approach to TM. This includes involving administrators, faculty, and external partners in the design and implementation of TM strategies.

8.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed for University XYZ:

8.4.1 Developing a Comprehensive TM Framework

Establish clear policies and procedures that align with institutional goals and address the specific needs of faculty and staff.

8.4.2 Enhance Professional Development Initiatives

Introduce structured training programs, mentorship opportunities, and leadership development schemes to support employee growth.

8.4.3 Improve Compensation and Incentive Structures

Update salary scales, introduce diverse reward systems, and promote work-life balance initiatives to enhance employee satisfaction and retention.

8.4.4 Strengthen Stakeholder Engagement

Foster open communication channels and involve stakeholders in decision-making processes to ensure alignment between TM practices and institutional objectives.

8.4.5 Investing in Technology and Innovation

Leverage digital tools to streamline recruitment, performance management, and professional development processes.

Accordingly, based on the collected data and analysed findings, table 9 presented below reflects a practical implications checklist on the findings based on the stakeholders that can facilitate the process. This checklist may be used to showcase the impact on stakeholders and can be used by other HEIs as a stepping stone in enhancing their TM practices.

Table 9: Practical Implications - Checklist, Researcher (2024)

Finding	Practical Implications	Stakeholders
Lack of Clear TM Standards	Implement standardised TM policies to reduce inconsistencies and biases.	University leadership, HR department, faculty, government regulators
Importance of Motivation and Engagement	Develop holistic engagement strategies including career development, incentives, well-being programs, and recognition.	HR Department, University leadership
Need for Innovative Recruitment Strategies	Adopt flexible work models, promote diversity and inclusion, and enhance employer branding.	HR Department, University leadership
Significance of Succession Planning	Implement structured leadership development programs and internal promotions.	University leadership, HR Department, Senior faculty

Role of Career Development in Talent Retention	Establish mentorship programs, networking opportunities, and tailored career progression pathways.	University leadership, HR Department
Importance of Talent Assessment	Regular performance evaluations and leadership training to identify and nurture high-potential employees.	HR Department, Faculty, University leadership
Organisational Agility and Adaptability	Develop both structural and workforce agility through training and strategic planning.	University leadership, HR Department
Compensation and Incentives Challenges	Standardise salary structures, update job descriptions, and implement competitive rewards systems.	HR Department, University leadership
Need for Effective Communication	Establish structured feedback mechanisms and involve employees in decision-making.	University leadership, HR Department
Role of Management Support in TM	Ensure management actively supports TM strategies through tailored policies and clear retention frameworks.	University leadership, HR Department
Openness to Change in TM	Foster a culture that embraces change, leadership adaptability, and continuous learning.	University leadership, faculty, HR Department
Performance and Competitiveness in TM	Implement goal alignment strategies, structured performance appraisals, and feedback systems.	University leadership, HR Department
Influence of External Factors (Regulations, Competition, Technology)	Align TM with regulatory frameworks, invest in technological advancements, and enhance market positioning.	University leadership, government agencies, HR Department
Resource Allocation for TM	Increase investment in TM strategies, including professional development and HR technology.	University leadership, HR Department, Government agencies
Importance of Alumni in TM	Leverage alumni networks for mentorship, financial support, and reputation-building.	Alumni, University Leadership, Students

8.5 Final Reflections

Reflecting on this study, I have gained a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding TM practices within HEIs, specifically at University XYZ in Kuwait. This research revealed critical insights into how TM strategies are implemented and evaluated, as well as the internal and external factors that shape their effectiveness.

One of the most striking findings was the inconsistency in the implementation of TM practices. While the university employs a variety of strategies, there is a clear absence of standardised frameworks, leading to inefficiencies and reduced stakeholder confidence. The lack of alignment at University XYZ became evident in various areas, including performance reviews and career development opportunities. The underdeveloped evaluation mechanisms and the lack of clear, structured talent pipelines further emphasised the need for systematic processes to ensure the effective management of talent.

This study also highlighted internal and external factors that influence TM practices. Internally, factors such as leadership support, organisational culture, and resource allocation emerged as crucial determinants of TM success. The gaps identified in these areas, such as inconsistent compensation structures and inadequate training programmes are consistent with challenges seen in other industries. Externally, the regulatory framework, particularly the “Kuwaitisation” policy, was a significant influencing factor. While these regulations aim to promote local workforce development, they also impose constraints on hiring and retention practices.

Stakeholder involvement also stood out as a key theme in this study. Faculty, administrators, and alumni were recognised as critical contributors to the success of TM practices. However, a disconnection between stakeholders' perceptions and the actual implementation of TM practices was evident. This gap calls for more effective communication and collaboration between all stakeholders.

Generally, this study has not only shed light on the challenges facing University XYZ in managing its talent but has also offered valuable recommendations for enhancing TM practices. These include the development of a comprehensive TM framework, the improvement of PD initiatives, and the strengthening of stakeholder engagement. As I reflect on this study, I recognise the importance of adopting a holistic approach to TM that aligns institutional goals, addresses internal gaps, and leverages external opportunities for innovation. This study has reinforced my belief that a well-executed TM strategy is crucial for the success and sustainability of HEIs.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Research Aim

“Investigate the talent management practices in a higher education institution located in Kuwait.”

Introduction

There are several questions I'd like to talk about during this interview. Just a reminder you have filled in and signed your consent form. Please note that all personal data will be stored confidentially. Some data might be published, and if so, it will be anonymized.

Opening Question

1. There is a large discussion regarding Talent management⁴ in the workplace in most countries, what is your opinion about such practices?
2. Describe the talent management processes in your organisation?
3. Do you think, the Australian University, is attempting to make progress on its talent management practices? Why do you think that is important?

Institutional Theory Context

1. In what way does the institutional vision and related policy affect the attitude to talent management practices in this organisational setting at AU?
2. How does the organisational context and institutional characteristics influence the large-scale change efforts of AU?
3. What external factors facilitate implementation of TM policies/practices?
4. What external factors restrain implementation of TM policies/practices?

Stakeholder's Theory Context

1. Are there any established processes within the organisation for each talent management practice?
2. How does the organisation identify skill gaps?
3. Does the organisation identify critical job roles which are crucial for organisational success?
4. Identify some crucial stakeholders to AU.

Culture

1. How does the university monitor and evaluate talent management?
2. How do the talent management practices reflect the nature of the dominant cultural mode of the University?

Evaluation of TM Practices

1. What internal factors facilitate implementation of TM policies/practices?
2. What internal factors restrain implementation of TM policies/practices?
3. Does the university have a formal definition of talent? If so, what is the definition?
4. Is this definition widely accepted within the organisation?
5. What is your personal definition of talent?
6. How are decisions made and executed?

⁴ Definition of talent management in a simple format: Talent management is how employers recruit and develop a workforce that is as productive as possible and likely to stay with their organisation long term. When implemented strategically, this process can help improve the overall performance of the business and ensure that it remains competitive.

7. How much authority do you have on talent decisions? How would you describe the university's capabilities to compete for talent?

Closing Section

Thank you for participating in this interview. Any additional comments or information for our topic? You may wish to withdraw your response within 14 days. A summary can be shared with you. Please be assured that this information will be stored in a confidential manner and be used for the purpose of this research only.

Talent Management in Higher Educational Institutions in Kuwait: A Case Study Approach Consent Form

Name of Chief Investigator: Sapheya Aftimos

Please initial boxes

1.	I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Information Sheet [v5], [2 nd December 2023] for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2.	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during the study, without giving a reason and without my legal rights being affected.	
3.	I understand that I am able to withdraw my data within 14 days from taking part in the study by contacting the research team via email, after this time (January 18, 2023) my data will be anonymised, and I will no longer be able to withdraw.	
4.	I agree to my personal data and data relating to me collected during the study being processed as described in the Participant Information Sheet.	
5.	I agree to my interview being audio recorded and to anonymised direct quotes from me being used in publications resulting from the study.	
6.	I agree to my anonymised data being used by research teams for future research.	
7.	I agree to my personal data being processed for the purposes of inviting me to participate in future research projects. I understand that I may opt out of receiving these invitations at any time.	
8.	I agree to take part in this study.	

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Name of Person receiving
consent.

Date

Signature

[The name, date and signature are not needed for anonymous online studies]

If you wish to receive a lay summary of the research project upon its completion, please provide an email address to which the summary can be sent.

Email address:

RECS ID: [BSS21095], [v4] [8th December 2023]

Appendix C

Invitation Letter

Dear Potential Participant,

I am a DBA researcher at the Aston Business School at Aston University in the United Kingdom. I am inviting you to participate in the study, which looks at Talent Management Practices⁵ specifically in Higher Educational Institutions in Kuwait. You have been selected as you have sufficient knowledge and background in this topic of Talent Management within Human Resources Management. It is believed that you will be able to contribute sufficiently to this research.

The research involves the study of talent management practices at University XYZ in Kuwait. Various themes will be explored in terms of culture, the internal and external environment, and the higher education setting. Attached to this email is the Participant Information Sheet form, that contains further details regarding the research.

The interview will take place at the work location (on campus) or virtually (Microsoft Teams) at your convenience. It will take around 30 minutes to conduct the interview, but your cooperation will contribute to the academic literature, as well as a difference to the practical management of the Talent Management practices in Kuwait. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, you may contact me at aftimoss@aston.ac.uk.

You, of course, have the right to refuse to participate or withdraw your responses any time before January 18, 2024.

If you wish to participate, please contact me at aftimoss@aston.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,
Sapheya Aftimos
DBA Candidate

⁵ Definition of talent management in a simple format: Talent management is how employers recruit and develop a workforce that is as productive as possible and likely to stay with their organisation long term. When implemented strategically, this process can help improve the business's overall performance and ensure that it remains competitive.

**Talent Management in Higher Educational Institutions in Kuwait: A
Case Study Approach
Participant Information Sheet**

Invitation

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study forming part of a Doctor of Business Administration - DBA project for Sapheya Aftimos.

Before you decide if you would like to participate, take time to read the following information carefully and, if you wish, discuss it with others such as your family, friends, or colleagues.

Please ask a member of the research team, whose contact details can be found at the end of this information sheet, if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information before you make your decision.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to explore the Talent Management Practices at the Australian University in Kuwait. This study is being conducted to identify any areas of improvement in the field of talent management with the various changes that are incorporated nowadays in the domain of Human Resource Management.

Why have I been invited?

You are being invited to take part in this study because you work at the University (Staff or Faculty), or you are studying at the University (student).

You have been invited to participate because:

- You are between 18 – 65 years of age.
- You have experience of human resource management by either studying it as a student or teaching HR courses as an instructor, or managing HR matters as a manager

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part, you will start by completing the consent form, and sending it back to the research team. Afterwards, the researcher will contact you to arrange for a suitable time to conduct an interview. The interview can be conducted online or in person on the University's campus depending on your convenience. The interview will take around 30 minutes with a set of structured questions regarding topics of culture, Talent Management, Talent Management Processes, and higher education.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

If you do decide to participate, you will be asked to provide informed consent.

You can halt your participation in the research at any time and any data collected up to that point will not be used. If you wish to withdraw your data after participation, you may do so by contact the research team via email and giving your name or student ID number any time before January 18, 2024. After this, all data will be anonymised and it will not be possible to withdraw it.

The interview may be conducted either physically at the Australian University campus in a meeting room, or online via Microsoft Teams. In both instances, the consent form can be shared via email to the research team.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. A code will be attached to all the data you provide to maintain anonymity. Analysis of your data will be undertaken using this coded data.

If we need to collect personal data (such as a name and contact details) we will only use this for the purposes outlined in this participant information sheet e.g. to contact you to arrange an interview.

The data we collect will be stored in a secure way electronically on a secure cloud storage device.

To ensure the quality of the research Aston University needs to access your data to check that the data has been recorded accurately e.g. for the purposes of audit. If this is required your personal data will be treated as confidential by the individuals accessing your data.

How will the conversation during the interview be recorded and the information I provide managed?

With your permission we will audio record the interview and take notes. The recording will be typed into a document (transcribed) by a member of the research team. This process will involve removing any information which could be used to identify individuals e.g. names, locations etc. Audio recordings will be destroyed as soon as the transcripts have been checked for accuracy. We will ensure that anything you have told us that is included in the reporting of the study will be anonymous. You of course are free not to answer any questions that are asked without giving a reason.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Although there may be no immediate benefit to you, you may find participation in this research interesting. We hope that the findings of this research will contribute to the applied practices of Talent Management in Higher Education Institutions.

What are the possible risks and burdens of taking part?

We believe that the only burden we will put on you is your time (we anticipate a maximum of 30 minutes), for which we are very grateful.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results of this study will be published in my DBA Thesis and may be published in scientific journals and/or presented at conferences. If the results of the study are published, your identity will continue to remain anonymous. A lay summary of the results of the study can be forwarded to you when the study has been completed. Should you wish to receive a copy, please provide your email address on the consent form, or contact a member of the research team.

Expenses and payments

There will be no expenses or payments.

Who is funding the research?

The study is being funded as part of a DBA degree which the researcher is self-funding at Aston University.

Who is organising this study and how is my data being used?

Aston University is organising this study and acting as data controller for the study. Research data will be used only for the purposes of the study or related uses identified in this Information Sheet or Appendix A.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study was given a favorable ethical opinion by the College of Business and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

REC/ ID: [BSS21095], v5, December 2, 2023

What if I have a concern about my participation in the study?

If you have any concerns about your participation in this study, please speak to a member of the research team and they will do their best to answer your questions. Contact details can be found at the end of this information sheet.

If the research team are unable to address your concerns or you wish to make a complaint about how the study is being conducted you should contact the Aston University Research Integrity Office at research_governance@aston.ac.uk or via the University switchboard on +44 (0)121 204 3000.

Research Team

Sapheya Aftimos

Email: aftimoss@aston.ac.uk

Prof. Helen Higson

Email: helen.higson@aston.ac.uk

Dr. Keith Schofield

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Prof. Pawan Budhwar

Email: budhwar@aston.ac.uk

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet. If you have any questions regarding the study, please don't hesitate to ask one of the research team.

REC/ ID: [BSS21095], v5, December 2, 2023



Aston University takes its obligations under data and privacy law seriously and complies with the Data Protection Act 2018 (“DPA”) and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 as retained in UK law by the Data Protection, Privacy and Electronic Communications (Amendments etc) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (“the UK GDPR”).

Aston University is the sponsor for this study based in the United Kingdom. We will be using information from you in order to undertake this study. Aston University will process your personal data in order to register you as a participant and to manage your participation in the study. It will process your personal data on the grounds that it is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest (GDPR Article 6(1)(e)). Aston University may process special categories of data about you which includes details about your health. Aston University will process this data on the grounds that it is necessary for statistical or research purposes (GDPR Article 9(2)(j)). Aston University will keep identifiable information about you for 6 years after the study has finished.

Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you withdraw from the study, we will keep the information about you that we have already obtained. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally identifiable information possible.

You can find out more about how we use your information at <https://www.aston.ac.uk/about/statutes-ordinances-regulations/publication-scheme/policies-regulations/data-protection> or by contacting our Data Protection Officer at dp_officer@aston.ac.uk.

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter. If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are processing your personal data in a way that is not lawful you can complain to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO).

When you agree to take part in a research study, the information about you may be provided to researchers running other research studies in this organisation and in other organisations. These organisations may be universities, NHS organisations or companies involved in health and care research in this country or abroad. This information will not identify you and will not be combined with other information in a way that could identify you. The information will only be used for the purpose of research and cannot be used to contact you.