

**THE ROLE OF TALENT MANAGEMENT ON INTERNAL  
SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION  
PEOPLE MANAGERS: AN INTERPRETATIVE  
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

Doctoral thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool  
for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration

By

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## ***ABSTRACT***

Universities around the world, including those in Canada, are experiencing significant challenges such as reduced funding, greater competition, and technological advancements that are reshaping their stance towards user-centric education. Attracting the best students and staff is unquestionably a top priority. Nevertheless, to reach the desired research excellence, dedicated teams of professionals (such as Finance and IT) need to support academia and the organisation as a whole. This doctoral study took place in one of the most prestigious research-intensive Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Canada. The institution offers over 300 courses of study at the undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate levels. Its current enrolment surpasses 40,000 students from 150 countries, making it one of the most international student bodies in Canada.

Using Higher Education People Managers' experiences and perceptions, this study aims to identify why Talent Management (TM) and Succession Planning (SP) activities are fundamental in fostering a stronger sense of belonging and engagement among staff. A constant difficulty for executives in HEI's relates to the failure to implement TM and SP processes at all levels; thus, this study focuses on the interpretations, complexities, challenges, and potential solutions that may lead to concrete and integrated actions in areas such as performance management, employee recognition, process improvement, and succession planning.

Due to the complex and multifaceted nature of the problem, this study plays a significant role in the identification of existing gaps and pressing needs for TM and SP where the researcher conducts professional practice. Throughout the various stages of the research, circular iterations between literature, data, and observation were conducted. The problematics required an in-depth interview process, as well as, an exhaustive analysis of the phenomena following an interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA). Recommendations are made for the development and potential application of practical solutions that help to illuminate and

solve managerial problems from the managers' perspective. This qualitative inquiry, therefore, creates and advances management knowledge and practice through original contributions that portray the complex dimensions of management phenomena.

The outcomes of this doctoral research are manifold. First, the study allowed participants to express their ideas on this topic freely. Second, it served as a reference and exploration towards implementing TM and SP processes in any HEI. Third, it fostered the development of a holistic understanding of employee training, development, and retention to improve workplace practice; therefore, this research revealed that although robust training initiatives exist for all staff categories (academic, unionised, and management), its resources are not utilised in the most effective way. The findings made evident the need for relevant development processes to be offered as part of training programs, allowing staff to grow professionally and academically within the organisation while reducing disengagement and unwanted departures.

The complex and multifaceted nature of the problem indicates that a holistic and systematic approach to TM and SP strategies in this HEI is required. Examining this issue within the context of continuity, sustainability, and diversity reveals that the difficulties faced by the institution emphasises the necessity for training enhancement. Embarking on a full-scale review of TM and SP processes could potentially have a positive impact and lead to insights that translate into organisational success.

**Keywords:** Talent Management, Succession Planning, Higher Education Institutions, Administrative Staff

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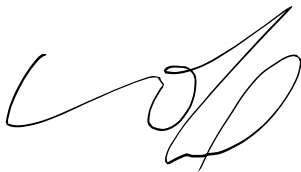
I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family, particularly to my mother and sister for always pushing me the extra mile, as they supported and inspired me all over this journey. To my daughters, a very important source of inspiration and strength, and to my fiancé for bringing me back on track to finish and complete my doctoral degree. I have no words to express all my gratitude to each and every one of them.

## ***AUTHOR'S DECLARATION***

I hereby declare that this dissertation is solely the result of my own research with the exception of the references cited throughout the report. The content and results have not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree at the University of Liverpool or any other university around the world.

I served as the sole author for the study, which was accomplished under the supervision of Dr. David Edgar as a requirement for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration. No direct source of funding was received for this study.

Signature



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## ***GLOSSARY OF TERMS***

<b><i>Term</i></b>	<b><i>Acronym</i></b>	<b><i>Operational Definition</i></b>
Talent Management	TM	A method of anticipating the need of human capital to later set out a plan to meet it.
Succession Planning	SP	Process of identifying and developing new leaders who can replace old leaders as they retire or leave.
Replacement planning	RP	Process of identifying short- or long-term staff for organisations to have people ready in an acting capacity to be deployed when needed.
Financial Administrator	Fin Admin	Person in charge of performing day-to-day financial activities to support university operations.
Financial Officer	FO	Person responsible for the financial operation of a unit that reports to the Finance Manager.
Finance Manager	FM	Person responsible for Financial Administrators, Finance Officers, and support staff, as well as the financial operation of the unit or faculty.
Full time equivalent	FTE	1 FTE is equal to 37.5 hrs per week.
Mentor		A senior person who actively contributes to, encourages and influences a protégé's career advancement.
Higher Education Institution	HEI	University, academy, or institute; a formal learning organisation that offers academic degrees and where teaching, research, and applied learning take place in the liberal arts or sciences arena.
Dynamic Capabilities	DC	The skills, processes, routines, organisational structures, and disciplines that enable a firm to build, employ, and orchestrate assets relevant to satisfying customer needs, and which cannot be readily replicated by competitors.
Employee Value Proposition	EVP	Set of associations and offerings provided by an organisation in return for the skills, capabilities, and experiences an employee brings to the organisation.
Employee Engagement	EE	Measure of the emotional and intellectual connection that an employee has towards his/her organisation.

## ***CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION***

### ***1.0. Foundation of the Research***

This doctoral study reports on TM and SP initiatives currently in action and describes the settings in which policies and practices are implemented at the institution where this research took place; hence, this qualitative analysis reveals unique findings, as an assessment of this nature was never performed before at this HEI.

For the most part, primary, secondary, and post-secondary education in Canada is funded publicly and overseen by the federal, provincial, and local governments (Thomas and Jones, 1998). In this vein, each of the ten provinces and the three northern territories have their own legal jurisdiction and district school boards to administer educational programs. In terms of funding, and according to a report from the World Bank Organisation, Canada invested 5.28% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on education in 2020. In addition, statistics show that one out of seven Canadians have a university degree and that Canada was one of the world's most educated countries (Grossman, 2012).

From an institutional lens, universities around the world, including those in Canada, are experiencing significant challenges such as reduced funding, greater competition, and advancement of technology—challenges that are reshaping their stance towards user-centricity and on-demand education. The complexity of operations has also been impacted due to the additional services that go beyond the typical and traditional classroom (Kompf and Denicolo, 2013). In the same manner, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) need to revisit and carefully assess their strategies, operations, processes, and policies to remain competitive. Attracting the best students and academia is unquestionably a top priority; as noted by Samson and Swanson (2014), to reach the desired teaching and research excellence, dedicated teams of professionals

in areas such as Finance, IT, Procurement, and Facilities need to directly support and collaborate with the full apparatus.

Based on higher education statistics, administrative and support staff in academic institutions account for 65 percent of their total workforce (Samson and Swanson, 2014). Their duties can range from front-line interaction with students to laboratory work, and all the way to research or management of day-to-day operations; nevertheless, this team of professionals is often paid minimal attention when compared to the academic workforce (Samson and Swanson, 2014). Furthermore, there seems to be a disconnect on how talent development is promoted by practitioners in the business sphere versus its treatment within academia (Christensen Hughes and Rog, 2008), and little knowledge about how TM is conceived, implemented, and developed in organizations (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen and Scullion, 2020). In terms of context, it has been suggested that often TM is designed and implemented as an instrumental process that is disconnected from the organizational context; therefore, contextual issues are not to be forgotten nor neglected as they enhance the rigor and relevance of the research (Thunnissen and Buttiens, 2017).

From a business standpoint, Cappelli (2008) argues that executives in modern organisations often fail to implement sustainable and effective Talent Management (TM) initiatives; in this vein, TM could be described as a way to anticipate the need of human capital to later set out a plan to meet it. In this context, TM practices focus on attracting, developing, deploying, and retaining the best employees (Rothwell, 2011; Thunnissen and Buttiens, 2017); nevertheless, it should not be confused with Succession Planning (SP), as that term denotes the process of developing a pool of candidates that could be considered for future roles or promotions within an organisation in case of unforeseen circumstances (Rothwell, 2011).

Recent research conducted by McKinsey (2020) supports Rothwell's notion and features further insights about TM and SP. In McKinsey's report, it is argued that getting the right people into

the right roles is vital, as it allows institutions to increase employee productivity. In a world in constant change, managing talent and placing a high priority on human capital matters more than ever. According to the authors, organisations need to identify critical roles and critical skills. In addition, they need to reflect on their supply-demand ratio and consider value levers and initiatives individually to then understand where roles and values are.

Given the context described above, significant TM challenges have led organisations to better specify the different types of capital that constitute 'talent', whether human, social, intellectual, or political. Bill Schaninger from McKinsey makes the point that organisations regularly "confuse people with roles and confuse talent with broad skill pools" (McKinsey, 2020). He argues that in many organisations, roles today bear no resemblance to what they would look like if the roles were designed from scratch. In sum, organisations need to clarify their critical roles (McKinsey, 2020).

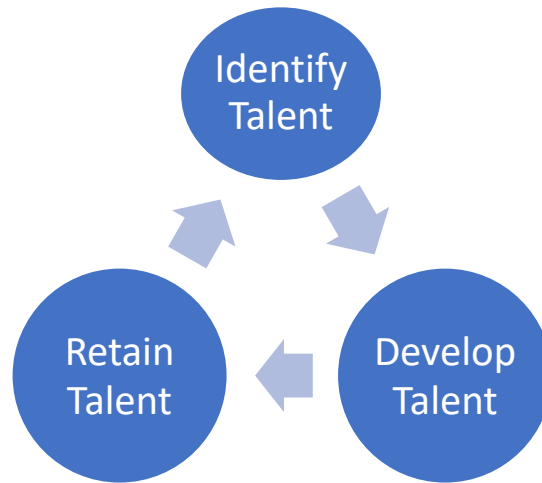
Farndale, Scullion and Sparrow (2010) also point out that there is a need for "better horizontal coordination of tools, techniques and processes for talent management across internal functions." This, in turn, requires a strategic deployment of human resources and an effective establishment of TM and SP processes across all levels of the organisation, which involves the proactive identification, development, and strategic deployment of key staff members who are "high-performing" and "high-potential" employees with "outstanding abilities".

Regarding new trends, institutions that wish to be competitive may benefit from a strong Employee Value Proposition (EVP). EVP refers to the relationship between the financial rewards and benefits received by employees in exchange for performance. In Minchington's words, (2006 p.45) EVP is defined as "a set of associations and offerings provided by an organisation in return for the skills, capabilities, and experiences, an employee brings to the organisation." According to Arasanmi and Krishna (2019), the application of EVP increases organisational commitment, engagement, and continuity, as the employee is willing to do more than the

minimum expected. This active relationship is, therefore, what promotes employee loyalty; the stronger this dynamic becomes, the less likely it is that employees leave for other institutions.

Although the institution where this doctoral study took place has not implemented an EVP framework, one could argue that its application could be beneficial. Due to the importance of EVPs, the researcher believes they merit further study in future research, as a well-executed EVP, paired with a solid TM and SP framework, could be a valuable tool in renewing employees' loyalty, engagement, and commitment.

The implementation of TM and SP activities supported by a strong EVP framework are essential to foster a strong sense of belonging and obtain greater engagement at all employee levels, yet the findings of this research revealed that the existing resources are not utilised in the most effective way to support these strategies across all levels of the organisation. Although the institution continuously invests in staff development initiatives, the findings highlight the importance of adopting a holistic and systematic approach to TM and SP strategies for this institution. Such strategies prove successful when they are sustainable, manageable, and fitted to the needs of the institution. To that end, this study examines key challenges and outlines future recommendations for research. The figure below depicts the context that surrounds TM and SP:



*Figure 1.1: Talent Management Cycle*

The Talent Management Cycle allows organisations to analyse their human capital resources as an interactive whole. This cycle begins at the planning and recruiting stage, continues to individual development, and lastly, progresses to retirement and beyond. Such a model also helps employers plan for the future and promote their employees' professional development by incorporating their strategic resource potential into the overall business plan. In this vein, the Talent Management Cycle is less about head count and cost figures, but rather about allowing employees to actively partner with employers to guarantee maximum performance and a strong return on investment.

## ***1.1. Research Background***

This phenomenological study took place in one of the most prestigious research-intensive Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) located in Canada. This institution was founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and offers more than 300 courses of study at the undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate levels. Its current enrolment surpasses 40,000 students coming from 150

countries, making it one of the most international student bodies in Canada. The university is also well known for its excellence in teaching and research, and houses a significant number of Rhodes Scholars.

The central point of this study emphasises not only the examination but also the explanation of what happens in practice at this research institution regarding Talent Management (TM) and Succession Planning (SP) practices, and the factors that affect the design and implementation of TM in the context of the research question. The empirical information was collected in a specific context: a publicly funded Canadian HEI. For two centuries, this research institution has tried to provide an independent intellectual space to nurture research, advance learning, disseminate knowledge, and offer the best possible education by carrying out research and scholarly activities judged by the highest international standards; in fulfilling its objective, this HEI embraces the principles of academic freedom, integrity, responsibility, equity, and inclusiveness.

In today's context, universities around the world are incessantly looking for the most gifted and committed academic and administrative staff; however, the long and complex search for 'talent' seems to be affected by economic and logistical factors (Thunnissen and Buttiens, 2017; Kravariti *et al.*, 2022). Particularly in Canada, HEIs are ascribed an important role in strengthening the production and dissemination of useful knowledge and relevant teaching. The presence and performance of highly qualified and 'talented' employees aligns with the quality of educational programs and academic research and the institution's reputation in the region. Since this qualitative study focuses on a research-intensive Canadian university with a focal point on the TM and SP of Administrative Staff occupying positions within the Finance Departments, the central question concerns how this organisation attracts and develops its management staff and responds to suggestions and initiatives from employees.



Figure 1.2. highlights important background information that places this research question in context:

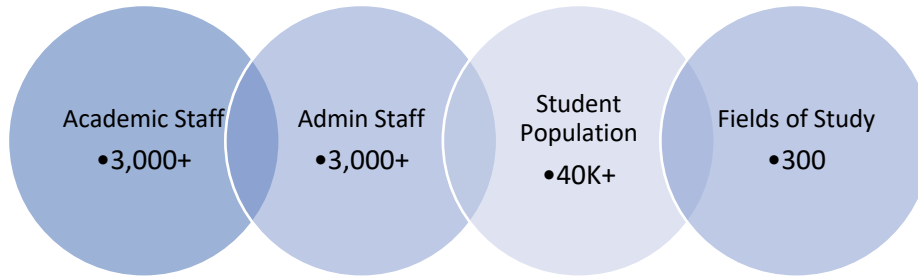


Figure 1.2: Infographic Adapted from Institutional Website

## **1.2. Description of the Problem and Research**

### **Conceptualisation**

This section focuses on the key empirical findings related to TM and SP that were reported by Berger et al. (2015). Their survey provides insight into the organisational culture, policies and practices that support TM and SP initiatives, and the activities that facilitate the streaming of operations, and the endeavours that build capacity within units and create change. Building from the survey findings by Berger et al. (2015), this section further provides grounds for the assumption that the university's current actions do not necessarily mean that the resources are used in the best or most efficient way. In Sections 1.2.1. and 1.2.3., both the research problem and objective will be further elaborated.

As part of the university's institutional commitment towards building a stronger workplace environment, an internal survey revealed that a substantial correlation exists between an

employee’s role (managerial vs. non-managerial) and their level of effectiveness in the organisation (Berger, Durocher and Soares, 2015). Those in managerial roles appear to be more agile and create stronger connections with their teams; therefore, more links of this nature need to be fostered to attain a stronger sense of belonging and engagement at both individual and team levels.

Furthermore, the survey by Berger, Durocher and Soares (2015) highlights that additional efforts are required in areas such as performance management, employee recognition, and process improvement, all key elements in a TM and SP framework. A similar recommendation comes from participants, who raised concerns that different opinions are not always welcome nor encouraged, and that staff are not at all, or only somewhat comfortable in trying new approaches. In other words, these findings could be portrayed as a great opportunity for improvement. Table 1 highlights the internal survey findings adapted from Berger et al. (2015):

<p>Obsolete HR system (limited functionality &amp; integration)</p>	<p>New system to be implemented in mid-2019 “integrated human resources management software – HRMS” TM module to be implemented in secondary phase</p>
<p>Key processes</p>	<p>Done manually &amp; multiple databases</p>
<p>Performance management &amp; career development</p>	<p>Done on paper and filed with HR</p>

*Table 1: Survey Findings – Adapted from Berger, Durocher and Soares (2015)*

Consistent with the survey findings from Berger et al. (2015), the researcher recognises that the critical problem in this institution appears to be that the investments in training activities for all staff categories (academics, unionised, and management) are not necessarily commensurate

with the most efficient use of resources to support TM and SP. Offering training without crafting suitable plans on how to use the theory and skills learned, and neglecting to provide relevant development processes for promoting professional growth among employees within the organisation, could likewise be seen as a costly waste of time and resources (Ready and Conger, 2007; The Manpower Group, 2013). If no encouragement or motivation exists for staff to advance their positions within the institution, the result is that TM and SP practices will deteriorate over time to the point that qualified and high-potential employees end up leaving for better jobs in other institutions (Towers Watson, 2014).

Part of the problem can be attributed to the use of an outdated HR system (soon to be replaced) that is not entirely integrated with other institutional systems. Due to its age, the current system cannot facilitate human capital reporting and HR analytics at multiple levels. The fact that the system is not able to track TM and SP at an institutional level, nor to perform high-level workforce planning and efficiently manage the career and development of existing staff, translates into a number of negative outcomes in terms of organisational structure, flexibility, and the lack of innovation at different layers of management (Berger, Durocher and Soares, 2015). Here, one could add the preconceived bias and known tendency to favour the hiring of external candidates to fulfil key managerial positions, an action that translates into staff discouragement that affects not only individuals but teams and departments as well.

In summary, current TM efforts prevent the implementation of successful TM and SP activities mainly because there are no suitable plans for the implementation of theory and skills learnt; in addition, there are no relevant developmental processes or support for advancing staff roles within the organisation. Furthermore, employees report that they are not empowered to find better ways to do things and that voicing different opinions is not always welcome. Participants also highlight that qualified or high-potential employees often end up leaving the organisation for better jobs.

Reasons why not to manage performance	Reasons why we should
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•No time</li> <li>•Bureaucracy</li> <li>•Too complicated and not our forte</li> <li>•Would not make a difference</li> <li>•Could get us into trouble</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Retain strong performers</li> <li>•Maintain engagement</li> <li>•Maximise collaboration</li> <li>•Increase functionality of units</li> <li>•Adapt to change</li> </ul>

*Table 2: Summary – Performance Management, Adaptation from (Berger, Durocher and Soares, 2015)*

The report from Berger et al. (2015), summarised in Table 2, establishes various areas of undertakings and a foundational priority for the organisation. More specifically, it highlights the recommended practices and mechanisms to be implemented at the institution; it is in this context that the pursuit of this qualitative research aims to investigate the causal factors that complement or challenge the implementation and application of TM and SP initiatives.

### **1.2.1. The Research Problem**

The focus of this systematic and formal inquiry aims to examine the circumstances that add value, influence, challenge and/or nurture talent management for successful succession plans in a higher education institution located in Canada.

#### **Research Question:**

*“Investigate the precipitants and causal factors that complement and nurture talent management for successful succession plans in a higher education institution.”*

Given the wide-ranging nature of this topic, additional questions will be used to specify the focal points and context of this study. These questions will be further developed in the section below.

### **1.2.2. Sub Research Questions**

What are the essential causes and barriers of the Talent Management framework required to actively identify and develop in-house People Managers (PM) in a research-intensive Higher Education Institution located in Canada?

#### **From the definition:**

1. What are the barriers, policies, and behaviours that affect talent management at an institutional level?
2. How can one understand the challenges academic institutions are facing regarding succession planning at a managerial level (literature versus reality)?

#### **From the context:**

1. Is there a disconnect (poor degree of awareness) on how talent development is promoted by management versus academic staff?
2. What are the challenges the institution faces regarding managerial non-academic succession planning?

#### **From the primary data:**

1. What are the perceptions and attitudes of managers with regards to talent and succession planning?
2. What improvements and changes are required to build and prepare the next generation of managers?
3. How can we acknowledge the value of internal talent to attain intra-organisational growth?

**From past to future:**

1. How can the actions that nurture talent management be used for successful and sustainable succession plans at a higher education institution?

**1.2.3. Research Objectives**

The research question and sub-questions target different perspectives, angles, and focus on the topic. The set of questions address the wide range of perspectives and the various research objectives; they also explore the problem, its context, the participants' circumstances, and the parameters of the research following a semi-structured approach. With expanded sub-questions, the objective is to listen and record all the possible reactions of each participant; by expanding the research question into a group of sub-questions, a deeper understanding of the problem is obtained. When subject to analysis, the findings reveal the reasons why the phenomena occurred. Furthermore, these open-ended questions provide the researcher with the opportunity of building a meaningful conversation with the interviewees and expanding the understanding of each of the topics discussed.

This systematic inquiry aims to:

- The questions from definition Investigate the precipitants and causal factors that complement and enhance TM and SP to understand the challenges academic institutions are facing.
- The questions from context examine the circumstances that add value, influence, challenge, and or nurture TM for successful SP.
- The questions from primary data emphasise, examine, and describe what happens in practice at the research institution regarding TM and SP practices.
- The questions for the future describe additional actions required to nurture and continue developing TM & SP in this type of institutions.

To do so, the researcher aims to explore the factors that affect TM and SP in the context of the research question and sub-questions; as a result, this qualitative phenomenological study explores the causes, barriers, and talent framework required to actively identify and develop in-house people managers. The researcher aimed to create actionable knowledge; however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, limitations occurred. See Chapter 6, Section 6.4.

### ***1.3. The Researcher's Role***

In principle, a worker is not trained overnight, so attending one or multiple training sessions does not automatically translate into the potential or the readiness to take on new roles, digest concepts, and transform new information into action. On the other hand, the researcher seconds Wenger's (2000) notion that each of us cultivates our unique toolkit and learning modes over the years that are often hard to discard (for better or worse). Nonetheless, whether the issue is instilling new skills in workers or retraining old habits, by empowering our teams and having them actively involved in the learning process, we can make a difference and see them thrive. In the end, as argued by Ready and Conger (2007), people are the most valuable asset in an organisation.

To support the initial argument, it is time for HEIs to think in terms of functionality by acknowledging the value of internal talent that leads towards placing people with the right skills in the right place at the right time. Whereas on-boarding is a key component that influences new employees' perceptions of the organisation and allows them to understand their contributions to it, there should always be a continuous effort to train, develop, and retain existing staff (Hartley, 2012). As noted by Shen & Hall (2009), the more employees are connected to their job, organisation, and community, the higher the chance to stay and seek intra-organisational growth opportunities. It is in this arena that the researcher's interests come into play, as we should work towards strengthening existing resources that could serve to

nurture our employees across the institution. Building from what Ready & Conger (2007) refer to as “organic growth”, I contend that attempts should be focused on empowering employees by developing their knowledge and skills (Towers Watson, 2014), instead of merely thinking about process improvement, unit restructures, or budget adjustments during difficult times (Berger, Durocher and Soares, 2015).

In terms of the researcher’s credentials, work experience, academic, and professional background, all have been acquired across multiple private and public institutions in Mexico, the USA, Canada, and the United Kingdom, providing the researcher with a great extent of exposure to different managerial levels in different environments. This experience aids in addressing the challenges and changes that the organisation under review is encountering. For the last thirteen years, the researcher has served as the Library Finance, Planning, and Resources Senior Manager, therefore becoming familiar with the environment, internal politics, and organisational culture that exists around the institution; the dual role as a researcher and as a manager can provide beneficial insights (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007).

At the same time, Bazerman and Moore (2013) contend that a researcher needs to be cautious not to draw early conclusions about an issue without a proper diagnosis, as unforeseen variables could shift research in multiple directions, and because the reality might not be apparent from the outset and uncertainties could differ from one scenario to another.

### ***1.4. Purpose Statement***

From an insider’s angle, this research study comes at a perfect time, considering that now more than ever, it is important to realise, acknowledge, and invest in the human capital whose day-to-day efforts work towards making what our institution is today. If the staff excel, the organisation excels; thus, calling for a sense of motivation, engagement, and commitment across the institution to adequately nurture and develop our organisation’s inner talent is



crucial. Furthermore, the researcher supports Heijden et al. (2009) and Borders (2010), as he believes that a job should provide continuous opportunities for the practice and development of the employee's capabilities. In the words of Melum (2002 p.55), "the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is about teaching organisation leaders at all levels to take responsibility for making their people and themselves smarter."

As a leader and manager, the researcher is convinced that it is crucial to support and stimulate talent within the organisation. One could argue that a good number of managers acknowledge its value, but only a few of them draw from it effectively. Rather than focusing on isolated components of TM, one should streamline the skills and competencies for all team members (Fatt, 2000) to build and support the next generation of leadership by preparing individuals, teams, and departments for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead (Melum, 2002).

To illustrate the institutions' current stage, as a regular employee, the researcher has had the opportunity to participate in several leadership development activities following the existing approach, and although he does not deny that learning was acquired during those activities, in retrospect, a myriad of possibilities could have further enhanced the learning. The question is whether a more integrated approach could serve to help the staff learn, apply, and foster the skills and tools they were exposed to; at the same time, these arrangements could potentially assist in the creation of succession plans to face the evolving institutional needs with confidence. An "integrated approach" denotes a way of bringing the cycles of learning and action together so that concepts are practically implemented (French, 2009; Coghlan *et al.*, 2014). The present research explores whether this approach would make a difference and in what ways these improvements can be substantiated.

In that context, the purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore and understand the causes, barriers, and talent framework required to actively identify and develop in-house people managers. Chapter 3 provides a full description of the methodology used and

the reasons why it was chosen. The targeted population consists of Finance People Managers of a research-intensive Higher Education Institution located in Canada who handle financial and budgeting processes and oversee financial administrator's staff. The selected population is appropriate for this research because the financial operation is a primary element for the institution's overall performance. It is worth noting that, traditionally, higher education research is mainly targeted towards academics or top management; hence, this study aims to explore middle-management staff to bring up another optic of a key operation that directly impacts the institution's performance.

As a scholar-practitioner, the researcher eagerly engaged in the practice of uncovering the potential outcomes of the issues surrounding TM and SP while learning from them. Following the Action Research approach learnt in the DBA modules and due to his particular role as researcher of the subject and subject of the research, this pathway allowed the researcher to free himself from his immediate present role, enlarge his horizon to look at the issues and opportunities related to TM and SP, and reflect on the findings and interpretations to uncover new ways, structures, and mechanisms that support TM and SP (Kilduff and Dougherty, 2000). Throughout the research, he remained flexible and receptive to the guidance and direction from the dissertation supervisors, and to any other reliable resources that supported or challenged the thoughts and findings. It was also important for the researcher all along to keep in mind that TM cannot be understood as a single phenomenon but rather as part of the broader society and its operating context (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen and Scullion, 2020).

## ***1.5. Chapter 1 Summary***

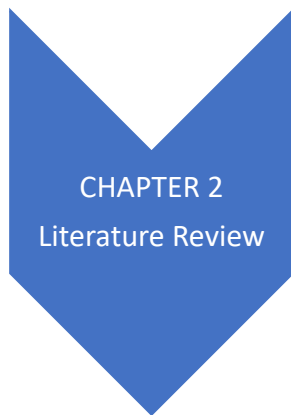
This chapter highlighted all the introductory aspects that allow for an understanding of the content and context of the research. It surveys the background, philosophical footprints, methodology, and other relevant information at the foundation of the research. In presenting the research aims as a continuity from general to specific objectives, the chapter allows for a clear overview of the needs and opportunities for university staffing and the benefits of robust and relevant TM and SP practices.

The importance of retaining talent at the managerial level dovetails with the frequent desire for better upward mobility in such roles within a Higher Education Institution (HEI). If such TM and SP processes are properly applied, the researcher argues, staff not only will be able to apply their training more efficiently, but the institution's needs will also be better met with well-trained internal talent. In conjunction, this chapter identified the multi-level analysis and integration of the research background, the researcher's purpose and role, and a clear and structured framework for the research question and sub-questions. The profile of the HEI was given with a particular focus on the role and development of administrative staff occupying middle-management positions within finance units.

This research study merits a DBA thesis due to the complexity and multifaceted nature of the research problem. As expressed in Chapter 1 – Section 1.2, the aim is to determine the applicability of TM and SP frameworks to current managerial practices in the HEI where this study took place; since additional efforts are required in areas such as performance management, employee recognition, and process improvement (all key elements in a TM and SP framework), it is imperative to study the phenomenon using the practical lens. By following an in-depth interview process and obtaining in-depth information, the legitimacy and clarity of

the participants' experiences within the organisation is visible, and then, rigour is achieved by following the IPA methodology.

The literature review in Chapter 2 seeks to bring elements of critical reflection from existing knowledge of TM and SP topics and will also compare major scholars' views to provide a theoretical foundation for the subsequent chapters.



- Overview
- What is Talent and Why its Importance in HEI's
- Talent Management from Past to Present
- The Ongoing Process of Talent Management
- The Importance of Developing Internal Talent
- Human and Social Capital Theories
- The Talent Supply Chain Model
- Talent Differentiation Strategies
- Dynamic Capabilities and other Strategies to Manage Talent
- The Middle Manager'sRole
- Chapter Two Summary

*Figure 1.3: Chapter 2 Outline*

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Overview**

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive evaluation of the scholarly literature related to TM and SP. The researcher studied the works of multiple authors known in the field to construct a robust framework that facilitates the understanding of the phenomenon surrounding the research problem. In addition, the literature review supported the inquiry process that answered the what, the why, the how and the who of the present study.

The chapter unfolds in four stages for better alignment with the focus of the research. First, the researcher attempts to answer, “the what”, which, in the context of this qualitative study, pertains to TM and SP. Sections 2.1., 2.2., and 2.3., define talent, TM, SP, and place the topics chronologically in their historical context.

Second, the researcher reflected on “the why” of the project. In brief, as argued by Lengnick-Hall (2012 p.505) *“People matter; people have careers and organisations do not”*. The researcher set up Section 2.4., as it was important to study internal talent development and recognise *why* investing in employees is important for organisations.

Third, human and social capital theories were analysed in Section 2.5. to address “the how” and identify the underlying implications and perspectives that link the investment in knowledge and skills to increased economic returns; following this train of thought, “the how” was also addressed by carrying out a systematic study in Sections 2.6. through 2.10., which comprise a discussion about talent differentiation strategies, the talent supply chain model, and the role coaching, mentoring, and training play in the support of TM and SP objectives.

Fourth, the researcher focuses on the role middle managers play as they act as translators between senior management and other employee groups. Their critical and active involvement facilitates adaptation, learning, communication, sharing of information, and the implementation of organisational change initiatives and strategies to support TM and SP processes. Section 2.10 addresses “the who” and highlights the importance of learning, particularly around the notion that middle managers should be active learners and promote learning initiatives within their teams.

## ***2.1. What is Talent and Why its Importance in HEI's***

The term talent originated from the Greek word *tálon* that means balance, weight, sum of money. For the Greeks talent was a unit of money that only rich people had them in large quantities (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries and González-Cruz, 2013). In this vein, one could argue that talent in its origins was exclusive. Fast-forwarding to this day and age, talent could mean whatever a researcher or business leader wants it to mean, as everyone has his or her own idea of what and what not talent encompasses. Talent can be defined as the sum of a person's abilities, skills, knowledge, attitude and drive that includes her or his ability to learn and grow (Michaels et al 2001 cited in Poocharoen and Lee, 2013). For Tansley et al (2006 cited in Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries and González-Cruz, 2013) talent refers to a complex amalgam of employees' skills, knowledge, and potential; while Cheese et al (2008 cited in Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries and González-Cruz, 2013) defines it as the total of all the experience, knowledge, skills, and behaviors that a person brings to work. Similarly, for Silzer & Dowell (2010 cited in Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries and González-Cruz, 2013) talent refers to a pool of employees who are exceptional due to their skills, abilities, and competencies.

In addition, talent is often linked to terms such as: key employees, high potential individuals, A players, and individuals with excellent abilities (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen and Scullion,

2020). Moreover, talent has been portrayed as the “happy few” while non-talent employees have been referred as the “have nots”; interpretations that generate inequality and differentiation issues within employees of a same institution (Boselie and Thunnissen, 2017). Organizations private or public continue to struggle to define and identify who are the right talents to be managed. On one side, talent could be seen as a *subject* when referring to people; on the other side, it could be seen as an *object* when referring to the characteristics of the people (Poocharoen and Lee, 2013). This ongoing confusion about the meaning of talent hinders into the theories and practices that exists around it. Furthermore, these subject and object tensions lead towards the bewilderment between the inclusive versus the exclusive orientations. The former inferring that all employees are equal and should be treated as such; while the latter referring to individuals with specific characteristics, expertise, or knowledge that place them in a different category than the rest.

Narrowing down to public sector institutions, TM refers to the operationalization of key HR practices that can facilitate staff who possess the required abilities and the context’s values, in fulfilling the sector’s overall goal for the common good (Kravariti and Johnston, 2020). In this vein, talent and consequently TM, needs to be examined within a specific context, in a specific perspective, and in a specific point in time (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen and Scullion, 2020). It is worth noting that talent orientations (inclusive and exclusive) can coexist; therefore, a need for organisations to adopt more pluralistic considerations of what talent means. In addition, context needs to be mindfully and systematically incorporated into the research.

For HEI’s, TM emerges as an underexplored area of research, and its practice, appears to be poorly applied, fragmented and reactive (Boselie and Thunnissen, 2017); nevertheless, the existent literature presents it as a key area of interest in the near future for both theory and practice. In regard to context, HEI’s are complex and diverse, because they are often characterized by issues of ownership, equality, the influence and presence of multiple stakeholders, federal and local governments, politics, and other core values that are intrinsically

linked such as culture, sustainability, and the community that exists around it (Boselie and Thunnissen, 2017); but before plunging into the specifics, let us review some history of TM along the years.

## ***2.2. Talent Management from Past to Present***

History has shown us how TM theories and strategies have shifted. Arguably, the “war for talent” never ends, as the struggle of finding and retaining talent continues to become harder and harder (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, and Axelrod, 2001; (McGregor and Hamm, 2008). According to Beechler and Woodward (2009), many significant factors are impacting the war for talent; these factors affect the quantity, quality, and characteristics of talent such as global demographics, economic trends, increasing mobility of people in organisations, transformational changes to business environments, business skills, business culture, and the growing levels of workforce diversity.

In the mid-1880s, organisations were considered single unit operations (Cappelli, 2010) because Human Resources efforts were concentrated in their core competencies and the rest of their operations were outsourced. Usually, company owners and top management positions were occupied by the same people, and unless workers were family members, their advancement would occur by leaving the business and starting a firm on their own. Filling executive jobs was not a serious concern until many organisations became more structurally sophisticated in the years to come, moving beyond a family business succession plan.

By the turn of the century, human power expertise came through acquisitions and mergers of different companies. Founders of smaller companies became executives in larger corporations responsible for the expanded operations. Thus, it became highly advantageous to find someone who had already done the job elsewhere and bring them onboard. During this era, the



corporate hierarchy was implemented, and the assessment of managerial capabilities saw the light. Back in the 1900s, there appeared to be no precise model to follow since recognition was frequently dependent on personal connections or a fortunate combination of circumstances (Cappelli, 2010).

By the 1950s, internal development became the norm in major corporations. The strategies used back then seemed to align with those still used today: for instance, 360-degree feedback, coaching, and rotational assignments (Cappelli, 2008). During this period, it was the norm for corporations to invest in their employees, who would typically spend their working life in one single organisation, as changing jobs was often regarded as a lack of success. In large corporations, TM was the responsibility of the personnel departments which were expected to have sophisticated development programs that contemplated succession planning elements as part of their strategy (Cappelli, 2010; Wellins, Smith, & Erker, 2009). Outside of large organisations, systems to identify successors were rarely put into place; hence, mid, and small-sized companies frequently wrestled with talent crises.

The model collapsed in the 1970s due to market fluctuations and associated uncertainties, as organisations were not able to address the various changes mentioned above in a timely manner and also, because they had outdated policies that were not flexible enough; thus, economic forecasting failed due to outmoded growth assumptions making talent pipes turn over and over to the point of dismissing lifetime employees (Cappelli, 2010).

By the 1980s, the economic recession worsened the problem, as organisations implemented massive layoffs and restructuring strategies with the aim of cutting layers of management to survive; these significant cuts led to the dismissal of long-term management employees. Furthermore, many of the human resources staff who designed and maintained talent management processes were also dismissed; with them, a good amount of knowledge capital and practices instantly disappeared. Only large corporations such as General Electric were able

to maintain their TM processes until additional cost-cutting pressures hampered them (Cappelli, 2010).

At the beginning of the 1990s, as the economy regained momentum, strategies such as external hiring became the panacea. Large pools of talent formed as individuals sought to take advantage of increased job opportunities, and organisations had to go back to the basics. As growth continued in the subsequent years, corporations poached talent from competitors to the point of creating significant turnover and instability due to the fierce competition between attracting experienced candidates versus losing experienced employees, which caused high-cost retention problems. During this period, the talent topic received remarkable interest from scholars and practitioners to the point that a group of McKinsey consultants coined the phrase “The War for Talent” (Michaels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod, 2001). By the mid-1990s, corporations began to reintegrate talent strategies into their planning, as the issue became a top priority for executives. At that time, tools such as 360-degree feedback regained traction.

By the new millennium, the global economy increased dramatically to the point where business leaders and HR managers engaged in fierce competition to attract and retain talent. It became clear that employees were back in the CEOs’ agendas, as highlighted in the 2007 CEO Challenge study (Wellins et al. 2009) and the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Global Survey by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC, 2008); nevertheless, the same survey revealed that out of the 1150 interviews conducted with CEOs in 50 countries, 62 percent believed that recruiting, motivating, and developing tactics were necessary, yet only 43 percent felt their HR teams were equipped to handle any change to compete for talent, mainly due to organisational barriers, poor communications, and internal politics. Regarding the skills required, the study advanced that adaptability to change, the competence to train others, and the ability to collaborate were critical to their organisations. In my view, these findings reflect the common gap during those years between an organisation’s stated vision and its reality.

By 2008, the global financial recession (considered by many as the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s), changed the game once more. During this period, it was easy to lose valuable contributors due to the massive headcount reduction and aggressive restructuring that organisations had to implement quickly. By then, it was clear that efforts should be geared towards managing change through people rather than managing people through change (PWC, 2008). In this vein, I echo Cappelli's (2008) thoughts regarding the challenge to attract and retain talent, as this resonates with the conditions of today's marketplace. Changes in demand and competition can rapidly increase operating costs and trigger additional management pressures to show positive financial returns. The question then resides in the organisational context and, whether or not an organisation should adopt talent management strategies to map out the years to come.

Now, and in the same lines as Ready & Conger (2007), leaders and executives often acknowledge that keeping and training the best people is a priority, yet such initiatives typically lose momentum in the face of cost concerns or the daily rush of business, to the point that the process deteriorates to a bureaucratic routine. To this extent, HEIs endure difficulties similar to those in the corporate world, which is one aspect that I will inquire into further in this dissertation. Comparatively, Mingers (2000, cited in Gold, Holman, & Thorpe, 2016), contends that it is time for corporations, business, and institutions to focus less on management and more on managing. A similar approach was advanced by Pfeffer and Sutton (2000, cited in Beechler & Woodward, 2009), as they argue that action should prevail over talk, because learning comes from knowing and doing.

An additional key element is pointed out by Newberry (2012) in regards to the importance of a proper organisational climate and of investing in people. She argues that the absence of fear will lead to a more positive experience during training. This idea was put into practice by the Estee Lauder Companies, which decided to relocate their UK Headquarters to be able to devote two floors exclusively to training their point-of-sale staff (POS). The effect was that the team

felt more engaged with the company, as they collaborated with headquarters personnel; in return, headquarters staff felt the same way, as they learned about the struggles the POS staff were encountering in their day-to-day operations (Newberry, 2012). This real-life example represents the importance of investing in people within the organisation, and such a model can be applied to a range of businesses and institutions. Coming back to Ready and Conger's (2007) ideas, the key priority resides not only in managing but rather in building talent factories by integrating functionality and vitality. The former refers to a rigorous talent management process that supports the institutional objectives (i.e., sourcing, development, engagement, retention), and the latter alludes to the emotional commitment that is present in the daily actions of the management team (i.e., commitment, engagement, and accountability).

In the public sector, TM research has remained scarce, as most of it comes from consultancy reports that provide analysis or recommendations from the private sector (Kravariti and Johnston, 2020); nevertheless, scholars such as Thunnissen and Buttiens (2017) have attempted to overcome its challenging application. Yet, when comparing TM with the private sector, one of the main differences is that in the public sector TM is more influenced by the context's fundamental principle of public service that is, the common good (Kravariti and Johnston, 2020). Lastly, it is worth noting that in the last decade, the responsibility for talent acquisition has been shifting from the personnel department to smaller divisions within the institution (Rudis, 2006). In this vein, the organisation where this research takes place has a Central HR unit; however, each faculty is responsible for its own processes such as the hiring, developing, retaining and succession of talent. It is critical for institutions to stop addressing TM issues in a reactive or individual way, and recognise the importance of establishing a holistic approach that encompasses multiple perspectives where climate, culture, and strategy fit altogether, and where processes are effectively interconnected not only at HR levels but rather across all the institution's echelons (Beechler and Woodward, 2009).

## **2.3. The Ongoing Process of Talent Management**

As argued by Ariss et al. (2014), research into the field of Talent Management (TM) has often been obscured behind the business, leadership, and organisational areas, mainly because it has been studied in the context of basic HR practices. Even if its level of interest has risen during the past two decades, authors such as Lewis and Heckman (2006), and Collings and Mellahi (2009), posit that TM still lacks a solid theoretical foundation, because it remains poorly defined and presumably underdeveloped. Due to these shortcomings, the researcher would contend that the scholarly work concerning the practical usefulness of TM practices remains limited.

The following section discusses relevant theories and the existence or lack of TM frameworks; it also points to some models that could offer a genuine and well-rounded practical foundation to TM practices, considering multiple levels to elucidate TM's potential, focus, and impact. As a starting point, Cappelli (2008), considers that there could be three ways to approach TM:

- 1) Do nothing – a reactive approach that relies on outsourcing
- 2) Forecast a succession planning strategy (similar to the 1950s) – a method that is considered obsolete, bureaucratic, and quite costly
- 3) Anticipate and meet the need in uncertain environments akin to supply chain management

Even if there seems to be a myriad of studies in the business arena focused on the topic of TM, a vast majority of them appear to be focused on high-level echelons (Christensen Hughes and Rog, 2008; Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Groysberg, 2010). Fewer studies concentrate on middle management (Claussen *et al.* 2014; Rutledge *et al.* 2016), and almost none focus on middle managers in publicly funded Higher Education Institutions.

Although the topic of TM has gained substantial attention during the last two decades, it appears that institutions and governments are nowadays increasingly involved in the matter (Al Ariss, Cascio and Paauwe, 2014). In the words of Cappelli (Cappelli, 2008 p.77), a constant difficulty for executives in modern organisations is the existing gap in the supply of TM. This gap exists not only at the top level but rather at all the different levels of leadership; therefore, the need to rightfully manage TM to its fullest effect is imperative. In other words, products can be easily replicated, but one cannot reproduce a high quality and highly engaged workforce (WellinsSmith, Erker, 2009).

Whilst there is no shortage of definitions in the academic and professional press, for this research work, **Talent Management** is defined as the process and activities of how we anticipate the need for human capital to later set a plan to meet it (Cappelli, 2008); thus, the quality and quantity of people become critical for organisations to achieve their current and future priorities (Al Ariss, Cascio and Paauwe, 2014). Note that, in this definition, the focus is not exclusive to “high echelon talent” (i.e., senior executives), as that by itself presents other organisational barriers (Pfeffer, 2001).

For authors such as Sparrow and Makram, (2015), TM is considered as a “bridge field” because it brings together ideas from human resource management, supply chain management, marketing, and similar fields. On one side, TM potential’s is broad because it applies across academic disciplines; on the other side, being too generic could also diffuse value and undermine organisational development. An important element highlighted by Sparrow and Makram (2015), is that “context could mean everything,” as there are large variations between models, philosophies, practices, and principles.

As a practitioner, this researcher finds it interesting how some values or assumptions around TM practices are rapidly taken for granted by executives, practitioners, and even academics,

while others are hardly unearthed or tested to enrich the understanding of their implications. In the words of Ready and Conger (2007 p.9), “it is easier said than done”.

Now, concerning Talent Streams, Lewis and Heckman (2006) recognise three streams of thought in their critical review that highlights how TM studies have limited their focus to specific areas inside the human resources umbrella:

- 1) TM substituted by human resource management – focusing only on areas such as recruitment, leadership & development
- 2) Studies focused on the development of talent pools – progression of employees through positions
- 3) Management of talented people – studies that argue top performers should fill all positions

Since the streams mentioned above are limited in scope and practicality, a fourth stream was advanced by Huselid, Beatty, and Becker (2005), as they argue that the definition is not about the player, but rather the position.


- 4) Key positions that have the potential to directly impact the competitive advantage of a firm

The fourth stream supports the contention that TM encompasses not only traditional HR practices but rather a theoretical orientation that includes activities, strategies, and processes that contribute to the sustainability of an organisation. Building on the previous definitions from Lewis and Heckman (2006) and Huselid, Beatty, and Becker (2005) regarding talent streams, Janson (2015) argues that people by nature want to be successful, yet many employees do not even get the opportunity to contribute their fullest potential to an organisation. As this research

contends, it is at the crossroad where employees' talents and aspirations intersect with the needs of the organisation that a succession plan comes to light.

While studying the topic of Talent Management, Wellings et al. (2009) divide its strategy into a set of priorities that encompass several factors ranging from the business landscape to sustainability. These strategic priorities serve to position the current research under the talent growth umbrella (see Figure 2.1). Given the nature and timing of this study, the aspects of talent selection and performance management will be left aside.

### Talent Management Strategy

- 
- **Business Landscape** – Business Drivers: strategic and cultural priorities
  - **Talent Implications** – People trends, capacity gaps, current situation, and projections
  - **Talent growth** – Selection, development, succession, and performance management
  - **Outcomes** – Business impact and workforce performance
  - **Sustainability** – Communication, accountability, skills, and technology enablers

*Figure 2.1: Talent Management Strategy (adapted from Wellings et al. 2009 p.10)*

In addition to the streams and strategies outlined above, talent also encompasses a complete Talent Lifecycle that includes all the different stages of interaction between an organisation and its human capital.



To illustrate this, Schiemann (2014) suggests eight stages as outlined in Figure 2.2.:



*Figure 2.2: Talent Lifecycle – Adapted from (Schiemann, 2014)*

It is essential to highlight that according to Schiemann (2014), “Organisations touch individuals” (i.e., potential employees, employees, outsourced labour, and contractors) before, during, and after they are part of the structure depending on how well the lifecycle is managed; this will determine the level of effectiveness in the talent lifecycle, including whatever talent architecture an organisation utilises, since it needs to be able to control the whole TM cycle efficiently.

The talent lifecycle encompasses all the stages of interaction between an organisation and its human capital. This ranges from building a talent brand that attracts the right talent to acquiring, onboarding, developing, managing, retaining, and even recovering talent (see Figure 2.2).

As noted above, institutions and employees interact in many profound ways before, during, and after employees are embedded in the organisation. All forms of labour are important in innovating, producing products or services, recommending new employees, and providing a positive or negative image of the organisation. The difference between positive behaviours in this cycle and neutral or negative ones can spell the differences between success and failure for the organisation. The talent lifecycle is the path upon which most people interact with the organisation. Talent management is the way in which the talent lifecycle is managed. How well that lifecycle is managed will determine the level of effectiveness of those talent investments.

Talent optimisation means that the organisation has balanced talent acquisition, development, performance and retention strategies, processes, and policies so that it maximises the outcomes of those talent investments—higher employee productivity, greater customer retention or purchasing, higher quality, higher retention of desired employees, reduced regulatory or environmental risks, and strong operational and financial performance. A growing challenge today is doing so across countries and cultural differences.

Sections 2.2. and 2.3. align the focus of the research around TM and SP. In these sections, the researcher attempted to answer, “the what,” placing these topics in the historical context from past to present. In Section 2.4, the researcher will address *why* TM and SP matter and why it is important to study the development of internal talent. In addition, this section addresses why investing in employees is important to organisations.

## ***2.4. The Importance of Developing Internal Talent***

Although studies show that people who have recently received training are more prone to depart an organisation to make better use of their freshly acquired skills (Cappelli, 2008), developing internal talent has its advantages, because it is less expensive, less disruptive, and supports the development of talent at a broader level to fit a vast range of roles within the organisation (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). On the other hand, external hiring can be quicker and more responsive in scenarios where a change of strategic direction is desired or when specialised skills are required on short notice (Collings, 2014).

In the words of Wellins et al. (2009), the driving forces behind TM come from the fact that there is a demonstrated relationship between “better talent and better business performance”; as such, improvements translate into substantial earnings. From the employee’s perspective, expectations are also changing (i.e., loyalty to the profession vs. business, work-life balance); thus, responding to the emotions and intellect involved has become more complex and dynamic.

In this vein, an element that is often left aside in the TM strategy of an organisation is the employee engagement (EE) factor. By definition, EE can be seen as a measure of the emotional and intellectual connection that an employee has towards his/her organisation (Christensen Hughes and Rog, 2008). The relation could be at any level (i.e., job, organisation, manager, or colleagues) and, as highlighted by Hewitt & Associates cited in Looi, Maruszczak and Baumruk (2004), the higher the commitment, the better the determination to go beyond expectations and produce extraordinary work. As an example, a study from Towers Perrin (2005) found that 66 percent of employees who are highly engaged would likely stay with their current employer. In summary, TM is not only about developing employees or creating succession plans; instead, its primary existence is and will always be to support the organisation’s goals and objectives.

In this regard, and as a way to measure the human capital investment in organisations, Schiemann (2014) proposed what he calls the People Equity Framework as a way to reduce the gap between individual and business outcomes. The structure consists of a closer look at the collective state of Alignment, Capabilities, and Engagement (**ACE**) in an organisation. **Alignment** refers to the extent to which members of an organisation agree with its direction (i.e., behaviours, boundaries, policies, goals); **Capabilities** to the knowledge, skills, and resources required (i.e., training, coaching) to meet customers' internal and external expectations; and **Engagement** to the satisfaction, commitment, and advocacy required to take action on behalf of the organisation (i.e., recognition, growth opportunities, fair treatment).

Figure 2.3 explains Schiemann's Alignment – Capabilities – Engagement (ACE) framework; as elaborated in Chapter 6, Schiemann's People Equity Framework suggests that how we engage with each other and how we align our capabilities will shape our experience and refine the understanding of team identity, individually and as a group. Thus, alignment, capabilities, and engagement coexist in every social learning system and continuously evolve in various degrees, as each aspect is complimentary and contributes to the formation of opportunities and organisational success.

The researcher aims to assess how participants' responses reflect different aspects of Schiemann's ACE framework and what areas of talent could be accelerated or deemphasised within the institution. This will help determine how the processes are working inside the institution to ensure that in-house solutions and processes are adequately aligned with other external processes and internal achievements. While this qualitative study does not aim to assess how Schiemann's ACE framework is implemented in the institution where this research took place, the researcher considers Schiemann's People Equity Framework a solid foundation and pillar of TM and SP practices and applications.

Alignment	Capabilities	Engagement	Profile
↑↑	↑↑	↑↑	Optimised Talent
↓↓	↓↓	↑↑	Misguided Enthusiasm
↓↓	↑↑	↑↑	Strategic Disconnect
↑↑	↓↓	↑↑	Under-Equipped
↑↑	↑↑	↓↓	Disengaged
↑↑	↓↓	↓↓	Unable / Unwilling
↓↓	↑↑	↓↓	Wasted Talent
↓↓	↓↓	↓↓	High Risk

Figure 2.3: ACE Profiles – People Equity Framework 1 (Schiemann, 2014)

Using Schiemann’s framework, organisations could examine each of their talent management lifecycle stages and give each phase an ACE score. The use of this method could facilitate the evaluation of how well talent is optimised, and how effectively processes inside the organisation are working. At the very least, it can help pinpoint the areas where talent investments should be increased or reduced; furthermore, the use of surveys and existing data sets could assist the comparison between scales.

Another approach worth mentioning is the one presented by Bidwell (2012) as he analysed individuals who were hired for a job via internal mobility versus external hiring, and studied the subsequent outcomes and effects. His main argument revolved around the notion that human capital is affected by the quality and performance of the workers who are hired via internal promotions or external recruitment. Bidwell argues that outside hires are likely to perform worse than internal hires but are paid more due to their higher skills and education.

Simply, as elaborated by the authors presented above, organisations have two primary options for filling vacancies: external hiring or internal mobility. According to the literature reviewed, the authors concur that internal hiring should be given priority as it provides several

advantages; generally, it is great for morale when employees can see an opportunity to grow within their organisation. Reduced turnover, increased retention and motivation are some of the most prominent advantages of internal mobility.

## ***2.5. Human and Social Capital Theories***

Human and Social Capital Theories will be analysed in this section to build upon the notion that investing in people and developing social networks can be beneficial for HEI. Sections 2.5.1. and 2.5.2. will identify the underlying implications and perspectives that link the investment in knowledge, skills, and social networks to increased economic returns.

Human Capital theorists posit that concentrations of educated individuals produce high economic growth. Authors such as Hoyman and Faricy (2009) argue that as individuals acquire more education, they will receive higher wages, increase the efficiency of their institutions, enact scientific advancement, and increase density in their home cities.

From a Social Capital lens, it is argued that personal associations represent value-added resources that provide members with collectively produced capital that can be used towards the pursuit of individual goals. It is said that through these associations, trust, facilitated cooperation, and collective action are built (Hoyman and Faricy, 2009).

### ***2.5.1. Human Capital Theory***

Human Capital can be defined as a value-generating capacity that encompasses skills, abilities, and knowledge (Collings, 2014). This means that contributions to performance are directly linked to the individual and not to the organisation; nonetheless, the higher the level of human capital, the greater the likelihood that individuals will perform at a higher level of

complexity in a business or institutional structure (Hunter and Schmidt, 1990; Al Ariss, Cascio, and Paauwe, 2014). In this vein, a fundamental question advanced by Groysberg (2010) in his book *Chasing Stars* is whether the individual performance is specific to a particular job, team, or workplace, or whether it is transferable to another role inside or outside the home organisation. If it is transferable, under what conditions? If not, what are the barriers that impede its transferability? Are social, cultural, or operational factors, to name a few, responsible for its success or failure?

Using a practitioner's lens, the researcher argues that human capital should not be considered as a single element because no one in an organisation truly works alone; there will always be a certain level of interaction and interdependence. On the other hand, Sonnenberg, van Zijderveld and Brinks (2014) provide an interesting comment regarding incongruent talent perceptions that exist in situations where executives consider someone to have certain talent potential but the individual is unaware of it, or vice versa. There is also the employee's perception of how the organisation has lived up to the promises made, what Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1998) refer to as the psychological contract: based on the signals received from the employer, an employee will try to make sense of the relationship and adjust attitudes and behaviours.

In a nutshell, the concept of Human Capital Theory is that investment in individuals can bring added value and investment returns to the organisation and the community as participation, productivity, and profitability are increased. The more a company invests in its employees (i.e., in their education and training), the more productive and profitable it will likely be. While this research does not aim to assess how Human Capital Theory is applied in the HEI where the study took place, the researcher will observe and consider how current TM and SP practices reflect the application of Human Capital frameworks.

## **2.5.2. Social Capital Theory**

A widely supported definition of Social Capital Theory is one that considers the sum of actual and potential resources that are embedded in the relationship or network of an individual or social unit for a collective good (Collings, 2014). Complementing this definition, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) suggest that three angles need to be considered: the structural, the relational, and the cognitive. The first hinges on the number of individual connections one can draw within a network of contacts. The second refers to the nature and strength of relationships built over time, and the third connects a frame of reference (shared goals, values, and norms) that is established by long-term relationships.

If we now look at the methods to increase management effectiveness, Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall (2012) presented three critical approaches. The first one relates to the type of control, whether informal or formal: the former, referring to the norms and values and the latter to the sanctions and regulations. The second approach refers to a support network for employees. Lastly, the third approach refers to the gateway of information (i.e., political, and cultural insights). While Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall's (2012) approaches have wide applicability, the researcher would contend that the influence of our networks could lead to bias or a narrowed point of view, thus potentially limiting our vision.

To avoid this shortcoming, the Social Capital Theories presented above need to work together with the Human Capital Theories described in Section 2.5.1., so that organisations can manage their efforts more efficiently and therefore boost efficacy and facilitate creative responses in a dynamic and often unpredictable business environment. Since the business environment is in constant flux, we need to shift mentalities from the static talent approach used in the past to one that continually adapts to organisational needs to put us ahead of the curve (Cappelli, 2008).



In summary, Social Capital Theory contends that networks and relationships are resources that can lead to the development and accumulation of human capital. This allows organisations to function efficiently and contribute to institutional success. Social Capital enables people to work together, innovate, cooperate, build trust, and promote respect among employees, thus leading to enhanced company performance. While this research does not aim to assess how Social Capital Theory is applied in the HEI where the study took place, the researcher will observe and consider how current TM and SP practices reflect the application of Social Capital frameworks.

## ***2.6. The Talent Supply Chain Model***

Supply Chain Management refers to the optimisation of products, from creation and development to final delivery. It encompasses integrated processes that include planning, logistics, development, distribution, manufacturing, and inventory management, among others, covering the product cycle from raw material to the final customer. According to Cappelli (2009), “failing to manage organisational talent needs is the equivalent of failing to manage your supply chain.” In the same way that corporations forecast demand and plan how many products will be needed in a particular season, and how they are going to meet that demand, employers can also use forecasting for determining talent needs. While this research is not focused on an assessment of the Talent Supply Chain Model (TSCM), its implementation, or its current application in the HEI where the study took place, the researcher considered this model as a solid reference and observed how current TM and SP practices reflect the application of the TSCM.

Mismatches of supply and demand in TM are potentially more recognisable than the concept itself, as the mix between too many employees and too little talent is one, if not the main,

challenge for any organisation. To achieve their goals, institutions need to recognise changes in the environment and adjust their operations and structures rapidly to remain competitive. Agile and culture-aligned processes that are integrated and shared among different departments in an organisation should be put forward, even if the outcome is unknown.

Contrary to other types of inventories, talent does not remain static on the shelf. Nevertheless, a comparison can be drawn between talent and supply-chain innovation. Instead of maintaining large warehouses with lots of stock, companies now continuously refine their manufacturing and supply chain processes by bringing just-in-time innovations that allow them to anticipate shifts in demand or adapt their products faster. In this vein, Cappelli (2008) proposed a similar framework called talent-on-demand, in which the idea consists of using the same approach for internal talent pipelines to minimise bottlenecks, speed up processes, and develop improved forecasts to reduce discrepancies. The notion resides on selecting the right mix of internal development and external hiring to minimise the risks and costs associated with both activities.

For instance, if we develop a pool of talent with broad and general competencies that fits a range of jobs, we can allocate employees to the vacancies as they come up, to later fine-tune the position specifics with additional training or coaching. By following this approach, we not only mitigate talent-related risks and uncertainties, but also assist in making business and labor-informed decisions.

Sections 2.7., 2.8., and 2.9., will provide an overview of the literature pertaining to Talent Differentiation Strategies, Dynamic Capabilities, and other strategies and mechanisms that organisations can use to support TM and SP initiatives. The assessment of such strategies and mechanisms will help the researcher understand the relationship between employees and organisations to frame the discussions and recommendations in Chapter 5 and 6, respectively.

## ***2.7. Talent Differentiation Strategies***

Another crucial aspect of this topic pertains to talent differentiation strategies. Sonnenberg, van Zijderveld and Brinks (2014) argue that there are two types of strategies:

- **Inclusive strategies:** those that refer to the development of talent for all employees
- **Exclusive strategies:** the ones focused on a selected group of talented employees

As part of their study, the authors above contend that exclusive TM strategies provide more efficient practices and fewer misperceptions, considering there is an unambiguous, uniform, and consistent message across the organisation. By themselves, TM practices such as internal coaching, mentoring, in-house development, and cross-functional training (to name a few), will not be sufficient nor beneficial unless they are appropriately targeted to the correct employee groups. From the opposite angle, authors such as Guthridge, Lawson, and Komm (2008), argue in favour of an inclusive TM strategy, assuming all employees possess a mix of talents, and considering that executives must recognise that plans of action cannot be solely focused on top performers; also because it is known that inclusive strategies support the common good goals via the increase involvement of all staff (Kravariti and Johnston, 2020). Per contra, an exclusive approach damages the morale of the organisation. In the public sector, it is not uncommon to concentrate efforts in exclusive approaches; nevertheless, this does not necessarily imply that in practice, only one approach is dominant, as both approaches have been adopted in these organizations (Groves, 2011); furthermore, there is a latent need to adopt a more pluralistic approach that incorporates them both (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen and Scullion, 2020).

Talent incongruence will occur when the organisation and the employees differ in their perceptions. If the strategy reaches the wrong group of employees, negative consequences could result, and this could expand all the way within the organisation, thereby limiting the

return on the TM investment. In other words, the more TM practices that an employee perceives, the easier it will be for an employee to believe and make sense of the employment relationship. For example, an employee could ask: Do I see myself as talent material for the organisation? Does the organisation see me in the same way?

Now, as a way to understand the relationship between employees and organisations, Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1998) bring up the concept of the psychological contract, a term that refers to how an individual's beliefs, obligations, and interactions are shaped within his or her organisation. Contrary to a legal contract, a psychological contract only exists in the mind of the individual; hence, it opens the opportunity for different interpretations and perceptions on how the contract should be fulfilled.

For instance, if the employee's impression is that the organisation is not meeting its promise, then the employee will, as a consequence, modify his or her behaviour and attitudes negatively, which highlights the nature and sensitivity that perception plays in the overall employment relationship (Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998; Sonnenberg, van Zijderveld and Brinks, 2014).

## ***2.8. Dynamic Capabilities as Strategic Way to Manage Talent***

In line with Harsch and Festing (2020), Dynamic Capabilities continuously shapes TM and organisational agility. Since today's markets are characterised by increasing global competition, and driven by more dynamic, complex, and unpredictable processes, organisations are required to adopt new ways of working and new skill requirements. According to the authors, TM is understood as a dynamic capability and as a process.

Today's markets are increasingly dynamic, and, as a result, agility is a requirement if an organisation wants to adapt to the changes in the marketplace. Organisational agility is gaining

increased attention not only in big corporations but also in academia. In this vein, Harsch & Festing (2020) explain how employees can increase their organisations' competitive advantage in dynamic environments. A key element of their assumption lies in the notion that emphasis should be placed on recognizing employees' talents and their potential as valuable human resources.

Organisations need to adapt and display a degree of flexibility, given the constant shifting conditions. To this extent, Sherehiy and Karwowski (2014), define organisational agility as "an enterprise's ability to quickly respond and adapt in response to continuous and unpredictable changes of competitive market environments." Hence, agility is not reactive but rather proactive, as this approach will support the emerging business opportunities in a changing context. Organisational agility is seen by other researchers as a new organisational paradigm and as a continuous process (Alavi *et al.*, 2014).

In the words of Harsh and Festing (2020), dynamic capabilities are necessary for achieving organisational stability and continuity. Furthermore, the authors argue that employees' strengths, attributes, and expertise are the company's key resources and that the TM process "serves the purpose of attracting these human resources to the company, inducing them properly, developing them further, and retaining or releasing them as needed, to gain and maintain a competitive advantage in a changing environment." The authors explain that various factors drive agility, including a volatile and competitive market, technological innovations, changes in customer needs, and shifting social factors. In a nutshell, workforce agility is about coping successfully and quickly with change since it focuses on how employees handle this change and use it to the advantage of the company.

According to Teece (2009), Dynamic Capabilities (DC) "are the skills, processes, routines, organisational structures, and disciplines that enable firms to build, employ, and orchestrate assets relevant to satisfying customer needs, and which cannot be readily replicated by

competitors.” Organisations with strong Dynamic Capabilities better adapt to challenges and continuously grow and bundle resources heterogeneously through innovation, collaboration, learning, and involvement, which translates into more agile TM and SP processes (Harsch and Festing, 2020). Complementing this notion and Teece’s definition provided above, Eisenhardt and Martin (2000), maintain that “dynamic capabilities consist of specific strategies and organisational processes like product development, alliances, and strategic decision making that create value for firms.” According to the authors, these Dynamic Capabilities often exhibit commonalities, which can be termed as ‘best practices’. In traditional markets, Dynamic Capabilities resemble the concept of routines as they are stable, detailed, and analytic processes that have predictable outcomes. By contrast, in fast-paced markets, Dynamic Capabilities become simple, experimental, and fragile processes that have unpredictable outcomes.

The theory developed by Teece (2009) regarding Dynamic Capabilities and its importance in the context of TM and SP highlights that these processes are relevant to innovation, technology management, and competition. This perspective around Dynamic Capabilities in the context of TM and SP elicits a logical question: how can an institution grow, compete, and maintain superior performance and retain talent?

While this qualitative study does not aim to address the question above, nor assess how the Dynamic Capabilities theory is applied in the HEI where the research took place, the researcher pursued an exploratory approach and considered that the study and understanding of the Dynamic Capabilities theory could allow organisations to differentiate themselves from their competitors. Depending on the context, the study and understanding of Dynamic Capabilities could assist in the prediction of outcomes, as well as in the identification of opportunities; in other words, by analysing existing resources and aligning existing capabilities to shape business strategy, organisations could enhance existing TM and SP configurations in the pursuit of long-

term competitive advantages that will in turn shape the strategic moves towards best TM and SP practices (Leih, Linden and Teece, 2015).

## **2.9. Coaching, Mentoring, and other Strategies to Manage Talent**

This section delves into the importance of training, coaching, and mentoring to support TM and SP objectives. Continuing with the conversation presented in Section 2.3 regarding the importance of developing internal talent, in the book *The Leadership Pipeline*, Charan et al. (2011) argue that it is most efficient to promote employees from within, because they know the environment from the inside, and because the process is less expensive than external hiring; however, when this is not feasible or realistic, then a search might need to be done to bring new talent on board. The researcher will inquire about the perceived value of internal talent in attaining intra-organisational growth and report on Chapter 5 about aspects regarding internal talent promotion. An interesting aspect of the Charan et al. (2011) model is that it is focused on leaders at all levels via a simple framework that looks into critical transitions from managing oneself, a team, a group, to ultimately the whole organisation. At each stage, different values and skills need to be developed. An area the authors emphasise is the use of mentoring strategies to avoid leadership stagnation.

The approach is also supported by Graham (1994), as she postulates that mentors serve as role models or skilled observers that listen to our concerns and point or lead us towards frameworks that can help deal with our dilemmas. For that reason, mentoring can potentially serve as a means to support people managers on how to transfer new learning into action cycles. A simple approach would be to understand how mentoring operates in other organisations or departments (what benefits and problems they encounter), to make sense of the process and

its usefulness; at the same time, the learning could boost the confidence and motivation of participants to continue their efforts, as advanced by Graham (1994).

However, in reality, managers often do not have enough time to commit to employee development or mentorship activities, as postulated by Goldberg (2007). It is well known that organisations (including higher education) have had the belief that as long as they offered competitive products and services, they could maintain their profit and performance in the market; however, in today's environment, expectations from potential employees have drastically changed. For instance, today's generations (Millennials and Centennials) expect immediate feedback, reinforcement, and development of their skills and interests (Beechler and Woodward, 2009); therefore, institutions need to look at their human capital management in a holistic way and not only in a promote-versus-hire decision at an individual level.

The question then becomes:

*How to capture and retain new talent as well as mature leaders since the generational needs are different?*

As advanced by the Association for Talent Development or ATD (cited in Cole, 2016), one of the primary responsibilities of managers is to develop their direct reports. Therefore, skills such as accountability, communication, collaboration, engagement and listening (also known as the ACCEL model), are crucial to their success. However, a survey done to managers by the same association in collaboration with Columbia Business School reported that communication, assessment, and listening were the skills with the lowest percentage.

These findings are somewhat alarming in the researcher's view, as dialogue (between managers and staff) is one of the primary foundations for gathering and exchanging information. How do we exhort staff to excel if we are not listening to and understanding them in the first place?



Now, if we depict training as a mechanism, how do we ensure it has the desired impact? Are the objectives clearly developed towards the lessons we want participants to learn? Do we openly explain the importance of what they are about to learn? How do we ensure theory meets practice? How can our TM architecture create value for the organisation? Do we know the root cause that our strategy/training is trying to solve? These questions apply not only to the participants but also to the presenter, as we need to ensure that our strategy, training, and practices are meaningful, memorable, and motivational; otherwise, no one would care (Rients, 2017). For training to be effective, it needs to combine content with creativity, emotions, and attention; furthermore, to increase interaction and prevent isolated thinking, we need to encourage training teams and communities of practice to attain an effective collaboration that includes “me, us, and them” (Allender, 2017). Applying different tools to the problem could be a powerful way to shed light on it. For instance, the use of the five ‘why’s or an Ishikawa (fishbone) diagram could assist in determining if training is a viable solution.

The former refers to a simple questioning method used to explore the root causes of a particular problem. By asking this simple question, we can determine the factors contributing to a specific problem to examine if training could enhance an employee’s knowledge, abilities or skills (Murray, 2017). The latter (Ishikawa diagram) is a structured brainstorming technique that allows teams to identify, explore, and display possible causes that are related to a specific event by looking at categories such as methods, materials, measures, environment, people, and equipment. The tool focuses on the facts and captures the collective knowledge and possibilities all in one place. Furthermore, the categories will encourage our teams to review different perspectives to potentially uncover causes not previously considered (Murray, 2017).

If we consider mentoring as another training mechanism, studies demonstrate that no single model fits everyone (Graham, 1994). On the contrary, it will be essential to test the potential of planned mentoring, coaching or even counselling activities in different contexts and situations

to understand if the outcomes are beneficial for all participants and mentors (Al Ariss, Cascio, and Paauwe, 2014).

Some sample questions to explore these mechanisms could be:

*Did the exercise stretch participant's minds and talents?*

*What are the lasting benefits?*

*Did mentors use the opportunity to re-appraise their professional practice?*

*Was there any role confusion?*

From a succession lens, fast-tracking potentials to leading roles is not new, yet its value resides on the implementation of structured actions and activities (i.e., mentoring and coaching) that align with the goals and objectives of the institution (Graham, 1994). A good implementation example could be that of Wipro Technologies: their recognition that there was a shortage of technical leads created the impetus to launch an academy to fast-track high potentials to leading roles to overcome their shortfall. The results were imminent and tangible in a period of weeks (Rao, 2017).

In addition to the potential and performance of top-level candidates, Wellings et al. (2009) postulate that readiness also plays a significant factor. For example, an athlete might be ready to compete and equipped to win; however, that might not happen because success is also tied up with the years of practice and preparation the athlete has put into training. Furthermore, performing at one level is no guarantee, as one may fall woefully at another level; therefore, taking a leader from potential to readiness is a lengthy process.

Another factor that is often disregarded is that, besides leadership roles, we should pay attention to any position that has a great potential to add value to the organisation. Recognising such functions could positively impact a firm's ability and capacity to execute its strategy (Collings, 2014).

In relation to structure, Collings (2014) encourages the use of routines to manage talent efficiently. By this he means that adequate systems and processes need to be in place to identify high-performing and high-potential employees across the entire organisation. Likewise, he believes talent pools should be created to advance organisational practice and assist in the ongoing recruitment and development challenges of our internal human capital pipeline. On the other hand, if companies struggle to fill strategic roles in the organisation, that may be because their talent pipeline is insufficient or inadequate (Ready and Conger, 2007). By using a proactive approach, we can fill critical positions as they become available and build our social capital network to facilitate knowledge exchange. To reiterate the metaphor from Cappelli (2009), employees advance similarly to products in a supply chain, insofar as each step of the process requires oversight and dedication.

## ***2.10. The Middle Manager's Role***

Akin to executive management, middle managers (also known as intermediate management), should not be power positions by mere appointment, but rather positions by choice. In the researcher's view, middle managers have two essential functions in organisations. First, they serve as translators of direction and strategy from top-level management. Second, they serve as inspiration, guidance, and direction for operational staff since they are the ones accountable for the day-to-day operations of the different departments across the organisation. The middle managers' level often gets downgraded or overlooked, as valuable information sits on this echelon that can help higher management improve organisational performance.

With reference to skills, it is also known that middle managers are well rounded in interpersonal and technical skills such as communication, leadership, motivation, versatility and even in optimisation and prioritisation of processes (Cappelli, 2010). Following this idea, Claussen *et al.*

(2014) argue that these skills and characteristics are not only important in reference to executive management but also between their other middle management colleagues. The more experience, expertise, and network size, the higher the chances of obtaining a promotion. Similarly, Balogun and Rouleau (2008) argue that middle managers' strategic role is less about translating senior managers' directions down through the organisational echelon, but instead, their importance relies on their capacity to connect the operational needs with the vision of senior management in such a way that helps the organisation maintain or enhance its strategic direction. Explicitly, the authors note: "The growing body of research on middle managers emphasises the particular importance of their sensemaking capabilities in terms of interpreting the intent to change, transmitting information, and gathering and infusing new ideas."

In addition Maitlis and Sonenshein (2010), broaden the literature to put emphasis on middle managers' strategic role, particularly during change. The authors highlight how middle managers are capable of making sense of the workplace environment to then propose strategies; middle managers are also important because they are able to influence others and construct meaning by using a sensegiving approach. Consequently, being an effective middle manager requires hard work, dedication, and most importantly caring for those who report directly to you. Moreover, achieving success in a different business area (i.e., business development or financial departments) does not guarantee a favourable outcome, as the skills and versatility required are entirely different. Added to this is that people frequently get promoted to middle-management positions with little or no training (Janson, 2015), which could be a disastrous mix.

On the other hand, those willing to embark on the journey to becoming competent managers need to understand the different levels of management and decision-making for them to see "the forest for the trees" (Huselid, Beatty and Becker, 2005). A further point to consider is that managers who only handle processes such as accounts, production lines, etc., are often well versed in balancing books or maximising efficiencies but lack managerial people skills;

therefore, listening to employee needs, or delegating tasks, could prove to be challenging to this group if they are not exposed to and trained on the topic.

Similar to any employee, managers also need to be motivated and accountable to excel in their jobs. In the words of Jason (2015), the greater the managers' responsibility is, the higher the opportunity for them to perform and shine. Being a successful manager requires competence in various areas (i.e., communication, time management, individual and team coaching, etc.) but most importantly, managers need to be there for their units and employees to engage fully and efficiently perform in a workplace environment where employees can strive to be their very best; additionally, Jason reminds us of the importance of right-fit, as "replacing one person who doesn't fit as a manager, affects one person; per contra, not doing so, touches many."

### ***2.10.1 Embracing Learning***

Wenger (2000) postulates that learning goes beyond our persona, as it affects the social, cultural, and historical knowledge that has been accumulated over time. In his view, learning is defined as a continuous interaction between people and the learning system that exists around them. Thus, communities of different natures (i.e., social, scientific, etc.) have been developed and have become part of our popular thinking, as relationships allow us to understand where we stand and where we want to be.

Complementing this belief, Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995 cited in Popadiuk & Choo, 2006), argue that learning by doing supports knowledge creation because it can be shared throughout the organisation. Even so, its importance resides in balancing the internal and external forces in the environment to adapt adequately and be able to learn at different levels. This implies giving participants a compelling reason to act: "what's in it for me" rather than "we told you so" (Rients, 2017). Another element to highlight is to match the delivery method to the skills being taught. For example, if interactions are done remotely, then training should follow a similar

style to make it as close as possible to reality (Toterhi and Recardo, 2016); in this regard, it will be important to put the new skills into practice so that experience is as close as possible to the real world.

## **2.11. Chapter 2 Summary**

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive evaluation of the pertinent literature related to Talent, TM, and SP. The researcher studied multiple authors known in the field to construct a robust framework that facilitated understanding of the phenomenon surrounding the research problem. In addition, the literature review supported the inquiry process that answered the what, the why, the how, and the who.

The chapter unfolds in four fundamental stages for better alignment with the focus of the research. First, the researcher attempts to answer *the what*, which pertains to TM and SP in the context of this qualitative study. Sections 2.2. and 2.3. define TM and SP and place the topics in their historical context from past to present.

Second, the researcher reflected on *the why*: as argued by Lengnick-Hall (2012) “people matter; people have careers and organisations do not.” Section 2.4. focused on the importance of developing internal talent and recognising *why* investing in employees is important to organisations.

Third, human and social capital theories were analysed in Section 2.5. to address *the how* and identify the underlying implications and perspectives that link investment in knowledge and skills to increased economic returns; following this train of thought, *the how* was also addressed by carrying out a systematic study in Sections 2.7. through 2.9. of talent differentiation strategies, dynamic capabilities, the talent supply chain model, and the role coaching, mentoring, and training play in the support of TM and SP objectives.

Fourth, the researcher focused on middle managers' role as they act as translators between senior management and other employee groups. Their critical and active involvement facilitates adaptation, learning, communication, sharing of information, and implementation of organisational change initiatives and strategies to support TM and SP processes. Section 2.9. addresses *the who* and highlights the importance of learning, particularly the notion that middle managers should be active learners and promote learning initiatives within their teams.

While the literature on this topic related to non-academic HEI staff was limited to non-existent, compiling resources, services, and efforts from other university departments could serve to create links and fulfil the needs and interests of the different university groups. From the literature analysed, it appears that multiple levels of research are still required to better incorporate talent management across organisational structures and specifically within academia. For instance, the implementation of additional analysis and measurement tools in HEIs could be helpful for studying the efficiency and impact of decisions at the different levels of management in this type of organisation, as they could potentially serve to enhance the validity and reliability of the topic.

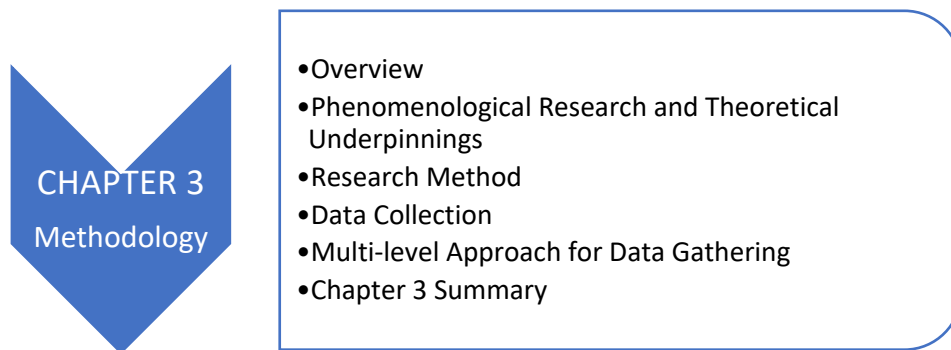
Although it sounds straightforward, measuring one side (i.e., variables) without considering the other (i.e., impact), could jeopardise the main goal we are trying to accomplish; thus, it remains crucial to select the proper strategy and its ideal path to make the best Talent Management decisions in alignment with institutional objectives.

Looking only at variables without measuring their impact or developing scorecards with no framework would raise more questions and threaten the whole process and its validity. As in any business decision, choices need to be made if we truly want to improve the quality of our TM practices (Lewis and Heckman, 2006). Following the words of Cappelli (2008), an optimal

approach could be that of a hybrid model that encompasses multiple elements in an individual way but also collectively and holistically.

For instance, a key discussion item is internal recruitment versus external hiring for corporations and higher education institutions to develop the right amount of talent based on the costs, demand, and risks around it. However, the intention of this dissertation is not to prescribe a solution, but rather to deeply investigate potential outcomes that could shed light on the problem, and that are relevant to the HEI sector.

The methodological considerations in Chapter 3 will delve into the philosophical approach used for this research, the method, the design, and the framework used and its justification. It will also describe the data collection and analysis methods. Chapter 3 also outlines the ethical considerations of the thesis and the process followed to reframe the research questions.



*Figure 2.4: Chapter 3 Outline*



## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0. Overview**

Building from Heidegger's position that holds that a researcher can never absolutely disconnect him or herself from the research, as doing otherwise would lessen its value (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar and Dowling, 2016), the purpose of this chapter is to describe the reasoning why the interpretative phenomenology approach (IPA) was used as the methodology to guide and execute the research. IPA seeks to study the areas within the domain of psychology that look into culture, emotion and cognition (Smith, 1996).

The chapter present the philosophies, the rationale behind the methodology used, the multi-level approach for data gathering, the analysis procedure, its justification, and how it was designed in relation to the data collection and the coding process. In this vein, Creswell (2013) maintains that the use of a qualitative approach helps with the assessment of any complex subject. A qualitative inquiry requires an evaluation of the subject's various aspects so that the context surrounding the research question can be better understood as the context of experiences is rooted in the stories shared by interviewees. The rich descriptions, shared experiences, and the power of being heard could be lost by following a quantitative approach.

After reading and understanding the different methodologies available for qualitative studies, the principal researcher chose IPA due to its focus on the experience that takes place around specific situations (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar and Dowling, 2016), and because it requires the researcher's understanding of the context in which the research takes place. In addition, the use of IPA methodology allowed for a better comprehension of how emotions shape people's experiences, how circumstances are interpreted, and how to bring together supplemental information and participants' experiences that could be pertinent to multiple industries.

From a researcher's viewpoint, the use of IPA aided in the perception and interpretation of the participants' experiences in relation to the process. Once achieved, this understanding was situated into the greater cultural and social environment—a synthesis that IPA facilitates, as argued by Larkin, Watts and Clifton (2006).

### ***3.1. Phenomenological Research and Theoretical Underpinnings***

The concept of phenomenology was coined by Kant, Hegel, and Brentano (Matua and Van Der Wal, 2015); their writings served as inspiration for Heidegger (1962), Merleau-Ponty (1962), and Husserl (1982), who further developed this philosophical movement.

Phenomenology could be described as a method that serves to describe experiences without theoretical speculations. To this regard, Husserl (Husserl, 1970, 1982) posits that the discipline of phenomenology is a science of consciousness rather than only an empirical exploration. Based on this approach, the method consists of studying phenomena without presuppositions of any kind, geared to attain the truth via multiple perspectives (Smith, 2010). As such, it is considered as a method of inquiry that aims to understand people's experiences from a subjective or first-person point of view which is directed towards an object that has content or meaning rather than reducing it only to something that can be measured.

In the academic realm, phenomenology continues to influence scholars in the humanities and social sciences disciplines, as it examines various types of experiences that include perception, emotions, desires, social activity, and thoughts. To this day, there are endless debates in academia, business, and industry about the validity and structure of the method (Gibson, 2004).

Authors such as Gibson (2004), argue that phenomenology is often limited to sensory qualities such as seeing, hearing, tasting, etc.; however, this researcher would argue that an experience is considerably richer and broader than mere sensations, and it is here where phenomenology excels, because it embraces the ambiguity and complexity of the human being's interactions that are focused towards generating findings that could capture the essence of the lived experience (Gibson, 2004).

For instance, experience-revealing questions could be asked to prompt employees to think about the significance of a mentoring program:

*What have you learned?*

*What did you experience?*

*Did it change your perspective?*

Fundamentally, phenomenology studies offer an analysis of different types of experience that could include perception, imagination, emotion, memory, desire, awareness, or even action. In this vein, Husserl termed these forms of experience 'intentionality' (Matua and Van Der Wal, 2015); meaning that the consciousness of the experience represents or intends something through ideas, thoughts, and concepts that make up the meaning of any given experience. In this vein, phenomenology extends from conscious experience to conditions that could serve to give the experience its intentionality.

To gain insight into the essence of the phenomenon, we need to search for shared meanings that participants experienced in this institution. The researcher will further elaborate in Sections 3.1.1. and 3.1.2., why IPA was chosen over other research methods and how it is intertwined with the philosophy and theoretical underpinnings of the study, and the semi-structured in-depth interview approach to data gathering.

### ***3.1.1. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis***

Phenomenology as an interpretative research method focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of the experience(s) that lead to a socially constructed reality. In this vein, IPA regards such experience(s) as reachable only through a process of interpretation from both the participant and the researcher (Smith, 1996; Wellins, Smith and Erker, 2009). Rather than reducing the elements into parts, the idea is to focus on capturing the wholeness of a lived experience to better understand and make sense of it; looking at the whole could provide insights that might be overlooked if using other positivistic approaches (Gibson, 2004). Even though IPA is well established in qualitative research, the vast majority of the conducted research has been in the physical and mental health disciplines; nevertheless, areas such as sports science and education are starting to reap its benefits. More advanced ways of evaluating its quality use criteria such as transparency, commitment, and plausibility (Smith, 2010).

Since there are no particular set of procedures for carrying out a phenomenological research project, it is the job of the researcher to select the approach that is best suited to the study. Therefore, this study uses IPA as research method as it aims primarily to discover the experiences, beliefs, and assumptions of staff members in relation to organisational change. Hence, in order to capture the ways in which staff make sense of phenomena in the workplace, a phenomenological approach will be used in this qualitative study (Husserl, 1970).

IPA was selected for this research because the objective of this study is to offer insights into a given context and make sense of a given phenomenon. According to Gill (2015), the objective of a qualitative research study is to look for the 'truth' from different viewpoints, thus guiding the researcher to a better understanding of the phenomena experienced by the participants, which is the current subject of study.

In general, this qualitative research aims to explore participants' experiences, their meaning, and the areas within the phenomena that are of specific interest to this study, such as emotions, perceptions, predispositions, and overall understanding of the meaning of language or particular experiences. More specifically, this research study was built on the premise of understanding and making sense of the situation within its context, especially that of the people involved; therefore, IPA was chosen as the appropriate methodology since it highlights the participants' experience around a specific social situation (Dowling, 2007).

From a literature review perspective, and as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.3, the driving forces behind TM come from the meaningful relationship between employer and employee; thus, IPA as a method of inquiry allows to bridge the gap between the organisation and the employee and provides the structure to establish a conversation. IPA as a research method has other advantages. According to Gill (2015), IPA highlights the nuances of feelings that shape staff understandings, interactions, and memories, thus helping institutions in their study of these phenomena. In addition, IPA allows for a deep evaluation of a phenomenon while drawing rich information from participants. Lastly, IPA as a research method is suitable for numerous different contexts (such as HEI).

Thus, the philosophy of this work fits with IPA and the semi-structured interview approach in the following ways. First, from the philosophical perspective, Husserl postulated that experience is the foundation of understanding (Husserl, 1982) and that studies should be unbiased. His argument is based on the concept of understanding phenomena before interpreting them (Dowling, 2007). For example, before the coding exercise had begun, the researcher took time to review the data and try to understand what the participants were saying before making an interpretation. In summary, Husserl's phenomenology looks to 'understand' phenomena "unbound from its culture through the descriptive detailing of participants' experience" (Dowling, 2007). In the same vein, Heidegger follows Husserl's premises, and studies the lived human experience and the state of being or 'Dasein'; this term

translates from German as 'being-there', where 'there' is the world. The term is employed by Heidegger to refer to individuals' experience of being; Heidegger emphasised the importance of 'understanding' an experience rather than just 'describing' it as Husserl professes (Dowling, 2007; Gill, 2015).

Second, to continue aligning the philosophical premises summarised above with IPA, and the approach to sampling used in this study, the researcher places emphasis on the contextual and relational nature of the participants' experience. This matches the IPA's focus as it concerns the collection of rich data that portrays the context and perspective of an individual for a better understanding of their reality. Therefore, IPA lends itself to a sampling of participants who share experiences; this means the job of the researcher is not just to read 'line-by-line' but rather to perform a close reading and analysis of the data and look at findings in great detail to make sense of and bring to light new perspectives.

Since IPA is exploratory in nature and focused on experience, it led the researcher to get as close as possible to each participant's perspective and emotions experienced in their organisational lifeworld. Thus, phenomenology as a method of inquiry, which draws on Husserl and Heidegger, paired with IPA as an approach to qualitative inquiry, allowed the researcher to achieve an in-depth and detailed understanding of each participant's case, and also allowed the researcher to emphasise the participants' organisational context. This will be thoroughly presented in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

Third, this research ambition justifies the selection and preference of semi-structured in-depth interviews within IPA. This approach to data gathering assisted the researcher in the inquiry process in three ways: first, it facilitated the dialogue between the researcher and the participant, because it incorporated a flexible interview experience, broadened by follow-up questions, comments, and notes. Second, to better capture the participants' experiences and perceptions, semi-structured interviews offered the opportunity to capture and focus on the

rich detail from the individuals' own perspectives as the questions were open-ended and participants had freedom to express themselves in great detail. Third, the conversational tone allowed the interviewee and the researcher to establish a dialogue rather than a straightforward question and answer format; in this way, participants provided a coherent and holistic account of their career experiences.

Thus, the semi-structured in-depth interview approach, aligned with IPA and the philosophy of the study, allowed the researcher to establish the research method and not only to demonstrate the important influence of context and detail, but also to elucidate the relational focus of understanding, experience, and interpretation. Hence, the researcher used this information to relate to the research questions and inform organisational knowledge.

### ***3.1.2. Action Research to Create Organisational Change***

The term Action Research (AR) was coined by Lewin back in 1946. It refers to a series of steps that are geared towards explaining, experiencing, evaluating, and learning new insights to modify the status quo in a given scenario, as it takes place (Lewin, 1946). AR is a research method that is based on analysing existing problems practically: cycles of reflection are used to understand, assess, and mutually take action (Pedler, Burgoyne and Brook, 2005; Greenwood and Levin, 2007); furthermore, it is a way of conducting research that follows meticulous requirements to satisfy and promote social change. The process resides in the enhancement of knowledge and learning by using an active collaborative approach that includes cycles of reflection for all participants to learn by doing.

In the words of Coghlan (2011), it is based in two assumptions:

- 1) involving the learners in the learning process produces better learning.
- 2) One understands the system only when one tries to change it.

As argued by Kemmis (2010), Action Research contributes to theory but also to the individual and collective self-understanding of those participating in the research by learning about “what happens” and “the consequences” of our actions; it follows that AR intends to integrate the three voices “me, us, and them,” using a collaborative approach that enhances its workability aspect. In the words of Rowan (2000), research with people rather than on people. A main difference between AR and traditional research is that the latter is often focused and published in third person; the researcher remains at a distance and participants are only subjects of study. This approach, used mainly in academia, has been found to have fewer commercial benefits (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).

Since this present research is based on the AR approach, the AR element was advanced as a way to bridge the gap between theory and practice in a practical and professional context by facilitating change not only via the suggestion and validation of actions, but also by finding their actual effects. In this vein, the researcher contends that action learning could offer significant advantages to solving existing problems: for instance, creating productive partnerships among people managers and the HR-OD teams can complement the dynamics of AR. The researcher is cognisant that it is of utmost importance to pay attention to the signals, ask the proper questions, be reasonable, and leave the fear to challenge aside. In the words of Rousseau (2006), “we are all entitled to our own opinions but not to our own facts.”

The researcher attempted to use the Action Research model with the focus groups to create cycles of learning and give participants an opportunity to experience a full AR cycle of planning, action, and learning that could foster the development of skills pertaining to critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and decision making. These outcomes could facilitate the assessment and understanding of the practitioners’ practices and contexts more objectively; also, the AR model could empower participants to improve their processes by implementing innovative ideas. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the time constraints of this dissertation, the researcher ended up selecting a multi-level approach for the data analysis



rather than working with a focus group. The aim of the researcher is to continue with the inquiry process after the completion of this doctoral dissertation so that the focus group is formed, and well-crafted plans are put into action.

### ***3.2. Research Method***

This qualitative study is based on action research and uses an interpretative phenomenological methodology (IPA). Originally, the data collection was going to consist of two parts, the first being one-on-one semi-structured interviews with Finance People Managers to collect initial data and the second part a collaboration with the focus groups (finance and organisational development – a division of human resources) to examine the participants' experience in relation to talent management. Influences such as culture, gender, and understanding of the workplace experience could serve us to gain an in-depth understanding of the methodology used and to generate knowledge in the higher education field. Additional details are provided in Section 3.3: Data Collection.

The approach was selected after an extensive survey of available research methods such as Appreciative Inquiry (a method that explores the collective examination of what is and what could be) and Ethnography (a method that focuses on an entire complex cultural-sharing group) (Husserl, 1970; Creswell, 2013). The Interpretative Phenomenology method was selected because it studies people's experience of phenomena and examines how this experience is interpreted. The researcher settled on the interpretative phenomenology method in order to understand the particular phenomena, "the how's and why's," in a real setting involving multiple sources of information bounded by time and place (French, 2009; Chen, Lin and Yen, 2014; Coghlan and Brannick, 2014).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its logistical implications, and the time constraints to write this qualitative study, the researcher selected a multi-level approach for the data analysis. Once all data was collected, the researcher used thematic coding to categorise them. Following this approach and once the initial themes were analysed, a secondary in-depth review of the data took place to further narrow down the original themes to consolidate them into main themes. The various steps of data collection and the organisation of subordinate and superordinate themes will be explained in detail in Sections 3.3. and 3.4.

This approach aligns with a DBA dissertation as its findings emerge from practical experiences in a professional context; additionally, it focuses on providing innovative and practical business management knowledge that applies to any workplace. The consideration of each individual's responses invited the researcher to delve in the collected data to find areas of relevance; it also encouraged the researcher to further his practical abilities and apply his findings to a business environment. The repeated reading and notation of interview transcripts, the comparison of one transcript with another, and the documentation of emotions and non-verbal expressions, among other actions, established the researcher's involvement in the data and allowed him to analyse, compare and reflect on each aspect of the phenomena at an individual level and as a whole to later follow up with further analysis in an iterative, circular fashion.

The undertaking of this qualitative study was premised on the understanding of the phenomena through a detailed description of the participants' experience and an unbiased summary of the data, which is how the intrinsic nature and indispensable quality of the phenomena were revealed.

### **3.2.1. Research Design**

The primary aim was to discover what assumptions, beliefs, and gaps existed in relation to TM and SP. Once data was collected and analysed, the goal was to produce an in-depth understanding of phenomenology that could shed light on and bring change to the organisation.

The data collection consisted of two stages: the first was obtained via one-on-one semi-structured interviews with Finance People Managers from different faculties of the same institution to collect initial data. After each interview session, the researcher systematically documented non-verbal expressions and emotions that added richness and rigor to the study. This step was complemented with a review of official, public-domain documents and presentations from the Institution. In addition, there was a process of observation and reflection by the researcher at each stage.

In this vein, data was first manually coded using Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, Microsoft Word, and large printouts to facilitate understanding, clarity, and visibility. This systematic process allowed the researcher to discover the preliminary themes.

For the second stage, the plan was originally intended to be a collaboration of participants within the focus groups to review, exchange ideas, and validate the findings obtained during the initial data collection stage. The participants were to be composed of members from human resources, organisational development, and Finance People Managers. Their first objective was to make sense of and validate the different perspectives obtained from the coding of the interview process. The researcher considered this stage as the first Action Research element on his study, also known as 'single loop': "do with and not for." (Argyris, 1985; Greenwood and Levin, 2007); however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this stage was cancelled and readapted with the permission of the thesis' principal supervisor, Dr. David Edgar

Therefore, the readapted second stage consisted in the triangulation of data and the use of a qualitative software called NVivo, as a way to provide more rigour, credibility, and clarity to the findings, as different methods should lead to same result (French, 2009). It is here, where the 'double loop' learning was expected, as new knowledge and assumptions were examined, revised, and renewed (Argyris, 1985; Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2014). The use of NVivo 12 provided the researcher with the capability of importing, organising, and coding data to visualise and interpret findings (Lewins and Silver, 2007), to later be able to group them in a comprehensive report to highlight key areas of interest that are presented in Chapter 5.

The methodology used in this thesis was selected after an extensive reflection on the available research methods such as appreciative inquiry (a method that explores the collective examination of what is and what could be), ethnography (a method that focuses on an entire complex cultural-sharing group) and case study (a method that focuses on a particular scenario) (Husserl, 1970; Creswell, 2013); nevertheless, as a researcher, I settled on the phenomenological approach, as it allowed me to do an in-depth examination and analysis of the particular phenomena, or "the how's and why's," in a real setting involving multiple sources of information bounded by time and place (Yin, 2003; French, 2009; Coghlan *et al.* 2014).

Another advantage of this approach is that the uniqueness of the phenomena is highlighted, as the researcher was able to carefully hear the voices of each participant and add a viewpoint that brings together the experiences of others through a collective understanding. Whilst the findings could not be generalised, they could potentially be transferred to other environments or wider audiences as action researchers could enhance the way results are reported (Mitroff and Shrivastava, 1987; Cunningham, 1993).

### ***3.2.2. Target Population***

From the outset, the plan involved a collaboration with the people managers from across the institution. By people managers, I refer to middle managers and supervisors in the Finance, Administration, and IT sectors, along with other units that have one or more professional-administrative staff under their supervision and who are employed in a management category level two, three, or four, and do not hold an academic position nor are part of a union. Due to time and data collection limitations, the research is focused in only one group: the Supervisors' Finance Group. This group was chosen because it provides a good example of the training and credentials required to succeed in the job, the tacit knowledge of each staff member, their expertise, and their sensitivity to their roles. Finally, financial operations are a primary element in our institution's overall performance.

The inclusion criteria for the representative sample are Finance People Managers who have one or more professional or administrative staff under their supervision from any faculty or department of the university. The exclusion is managers in the category "one" who only manage processes without people under their supervision. The narrowed-down target population that fits the criteria is around 60 staff. A sample of at least 10 Finance People Managers is expected. Participants could also come from organisational development (a Human Resources division). Since data saturation was considered, the primary researcher anticipated that 10-15 participants would be an adequate representation of this research.

### ***3.2.3. Research Ethics Approval and Participants' Consent***

The researcher submitted this study for research ethics approval first to the University of Liverpool as part of my DBA dissertation; once obtained, a secondary research ethics approval was required from the institution where the research took place. Once both institutions approved the study, the data collection stage could begin. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a need to revisit both research ethics approvals to make sure the study was fully compliant. The consent process was discussed with the potential participants, and during this discussion they had the opportunity to review the agreement forms including the procedures for withdrawing from the study and the measures taken to protect participants' integrity. At the same time, it was mentioned to them how the data would be maintained and protected to preserve their anonymity.

### ***3.3. Data Collection***

The data collection process was documented at all stages using a structured record of progress. Data collection started after both ethical approvals (that of UofL and the researched institution) were granted. An initial letter of invitation was sent to the core group of participants, "the Finance People Managers group," using maximum variation sampling (also known as heterogeneous sampling) to exhibit a wide range of experience and qualities across the difference finance units. Once potential participants agreed and signed the participant information sheet (PIS), a time was scheduled for the interview. As highlighted by Creswell (2013), the range of sample should suffice, as long as saturation is reached.

Eleven interviews were conducted with Finance People Managers across the institution and, one additional interview was conducted with a member of the Organisational Development

team that specialises in TM and SP for a combined total of twelve interviews. Three interviews were conducted in person prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the remaining nine interviews were done in a virtual format. A revision of the ethics approval form was also submitted to both institutions for data to be collected via a virtual environment; once approved, the interviews were scheduled, and the questions were emailed to participants at the beginning of the interview to increase legibility and accuracy.

The interview followed a semi-structured approach with eight main sections that covered questions from definition and literature to practicality. As the interview progressed, the researcher moved towards a more detailed context and specifics for a combined total of thirty-five questions. As mentioned in Section 3.3.1., It is important to note that there was an interview protocol test performed *a priori* with some potential participants to verify the flow, length of time, and clarity of the questions.

### **3.3.1. Interview Protocol Test**

An interview protocol was created and tested with several potential participants prior to begin with the official data collection. Its main purpose was to serve as a guide for the whole interview process and to make sure the interview was easy to understand by the participants. This guide allowed the researcher to test what to say at the beginning and at the end of the interview, and to pave the way on how the topic was introduced to the participants to build rapport and get them comfortable on the topic; at the same time, the test also allowed the researcher to time the approximate length of the interview, to verify the overall flow of the open-ended questions to allow enough time for participants to freely elaborate on their responses and to be able to ask any follow-up questions when needed.

### 3.3.2. Nature of the Data Collection

The data was collected during the spring and summer of 2020 via audio-recorded in-person interviews and had to be modified to allow for online interviews due to the restrictions implemented by the Minister of Health of Canada and the Minister of the Province due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Out of the 12 participants, only three interviews were conducted in-person, while the remaining nine, were done virtually using either Zoom or Microsoft teams platforms. While many Finance staff are bilingual (English and French), the survey was created in English language to ensure consistency; in terms of the length of each interview, the average time as between 60 to 90 minutes. The use of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions allowed the researcher to capture in detail all information from the participants (i.e. the who's and what's); thus, allowing them to portray a holistic and detailed account for their ongoing and past experiences in their workplace. Figure 3.1 provides additional details of the participants background general information, the years of experience, and number of staff that report to them.

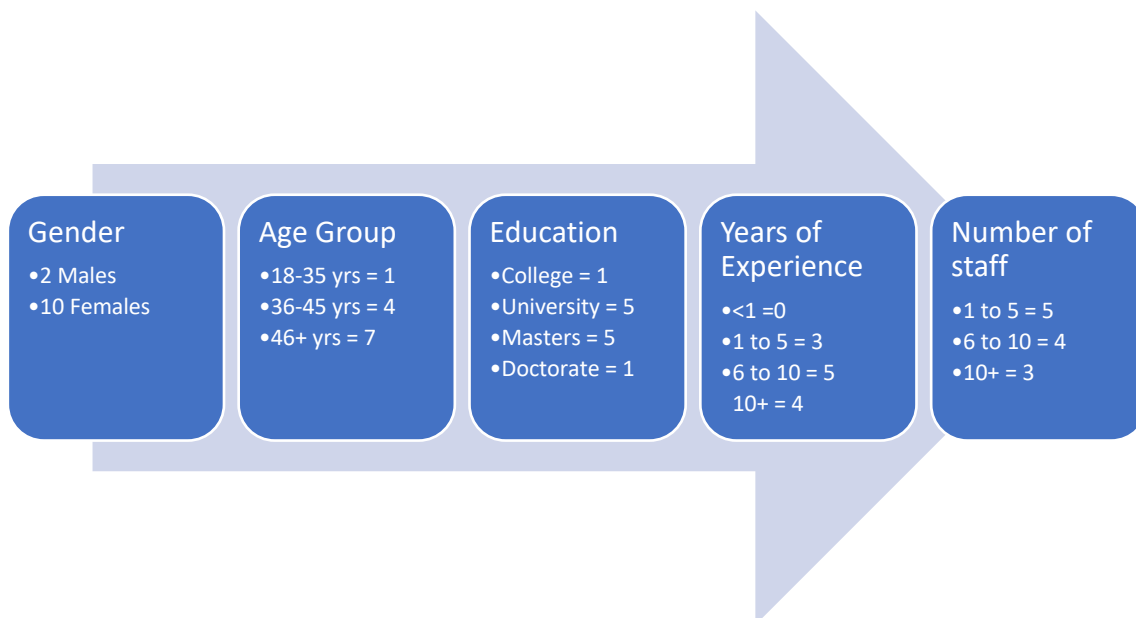


Figure 3.1: Participants Background Information



Once the interviews were completed, the next step was to transcribe all the information collected to begin the data anonymization process. In this vein, the recordings were uploaded to the TranscribeMe software to be able to use their verbatim speech-to-text product recognition to connect the what and how of participants voice, to ensure objectivity, confirmability, and overall trustworthiness (Shah and Corley, 2006). Once this step was completed, the researcher went thru all the transcripts one more time, to make sure all data was properly transcribed and anonymized. Once the files were completed, all data was saved in an encrypted and password protected hard drive ready to be used for data analysis.

### ***3.3.3. Collection of Complementary Data***

As mentioned in section 3.2.1., the researcher resorted to complementary sources of information to build the content analysis with the aid of verbal and non-verbal cues, interview notes, persistent observation, prolonged engagement, and data triangulation to address the research question, with the primary aim to discover what assumptions, beliefs, and gaps existed in relation to TM and SP at the institution researched.

During the data collection process, and building from Tobin and Begley (2004), the aim was to gather not only data that was expressed by the answers or comments from the participants, but also, to actively listen and observe the tone of voice, facial expressions, and hand gestures of the participants, to better understand the feelings and emotions experienced during the interview process. As the researcher was finishing each of the interviews, he also took the time to capture his impressions while they were still fresh in his memory. This additional information allowed him to obtain a deeper understanding of how faculties and finance units at this institution are managed, and to better understand the TM and SP processes that are currently followed.

In several instances, this additional information provided a greater level of insight and complemented preliminary findings. One element that struck me during this process, was the genuine enthusiasm displayed by participants who were constantly trying to find better ways to support and empower their staff, thus, informally confirming that there is willingness and openness to consider TM and SP topics. It is important to mention that at the time of writing this dissertation, a new HR management platform was in the process of being implemented at the research institution.

In the first phase of the new system integration, a basic version of the TM module was implemented; this migration included staff records and all the necessary processes needed to continue the institutions' operation. It appears that the SP module might be integrated in the future, but with no specific date given at the time the research took place.

From a scholarly perspective, the researcher realised the value of collaborating with colleagues from other finance units, as well as with members of the organisational development team. This exercise allowed him to foster a transformational initiative that could assist in creating an opportunity to contribute to the development of TM and SP strategies.

### ***3.4. Multi-level Approach for Data Gathering***

To follow an organised and systematic way of analysing the data, a multilevel approach was used to produce relevant data codes that could serve as a basis for the data themes. This multi-level approach consists of manual coding followed by the use of Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, large printouts to see all participants' responses at a glance and then, with the use of NVivo12 software, nodes were created for each theme to provide the researcher with the capability of importing, organising, and coding data to visualise and interpret findings (Lewins and Silver, 2007). The outcome of this phase was the discovery and validation of themes

that were brought to light by the participants. The overall data gathering, and multi-level coding process as presented in this section is summarised in Figure 3.2. below:

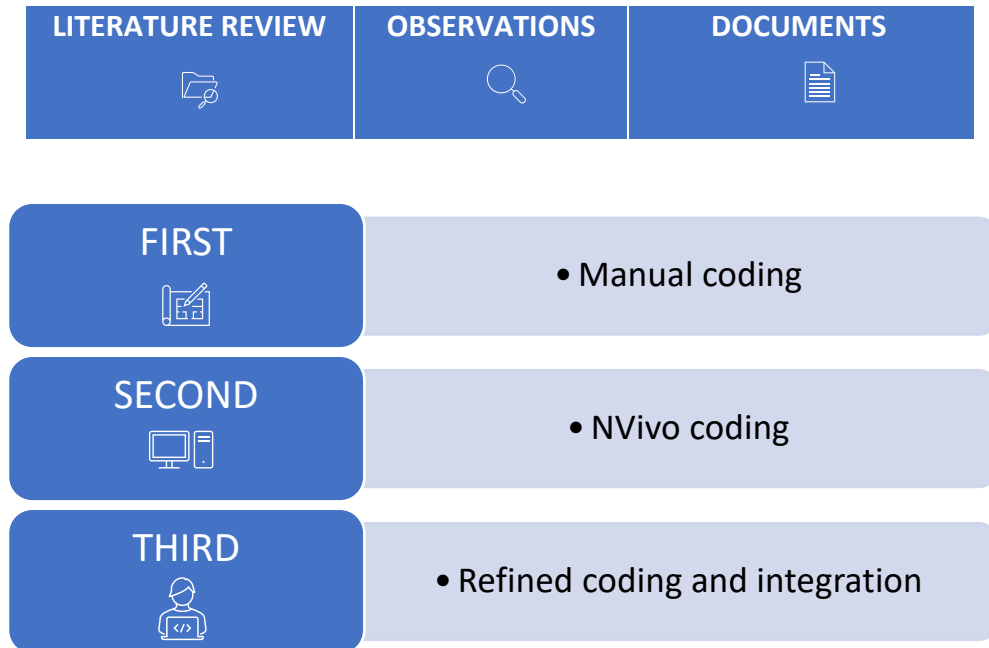


Figure 3.2: Multi-level Blueprint of Data Gathering and Coding Process

### 3.4.1. Manual Coding

The following section delineates the manual coding approach that was followed at the initial stage of the data analysis. Once the interviews were transcribed verbatim to Microsoft Word, the researcher carefully evaluated the material by listening and reading simultaneously to ensure accuracy. Then, he invested sufficient time to read through the interviews several times and scrutinise the responses to increase the probability of developing credible findings (Cassell and Symon, 2004; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

In a preliminary phase, with the transcripts in Word format, the questions were highlighted in a blue colour, proper punctuation was assigned, and subsequently, key responses as well as relevant data extracts were highlighted in yellow to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' answers. The researcher used this approach consistently throughout all interviews with the goal of ensuring that the process followed was not only aligned with the chosen timeframe but also properly structured. He determined reasonable timeframes for each of the coding phases to make sure that each interview was carefully analysed without rushing the process. Throughout the manual analysis, files were saved with a consistent naming convention and stored in a password-protected hard drive.

Once all the interviews were carefully assessed in Microsoft Word, he proceeded to input all the data that was gathered into Microsoft Excel. Second, each of the interview questions was tabulated and an appropriate format was designed; additional fields were created to further review content analysis and include notes and keywords for feelings, emotions, and the researcher's perceptions. Third, strategic sections were color-coded, allowing him to have an organised approach and a visual interpretation of the manual process. Finally, recurring keywords were highlighted in bold to facilitate the upcoming thematic analysis process. Figure 3.3. summarises the steps followed during the manual process:

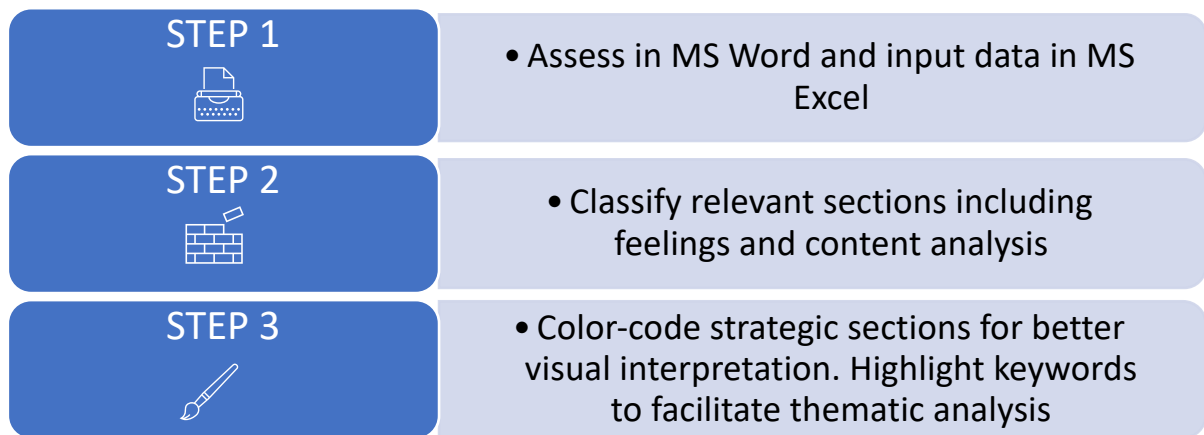


Figure 3.3: Manual Coding Exercise

### 3.4.2. Thematic Coding Process

Consistent with the methodological approach used by Nowell *et al.* (2017), the researcher adopted the six phases as outlined in Figure 3.4. to identify, analyse, and report recurring themes found in this research to ensure its rigour and trustworthiness.

The reasons why this method was considered include:

- a) Its simplicity and adequacy.
- b) Its practicality, particularly at analysing large data sets.
- c) Its clarity and efficacy at integrating theory and practice.



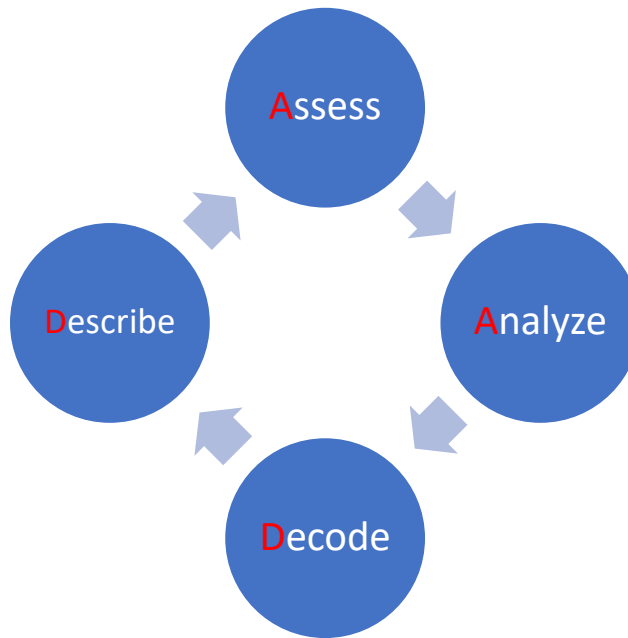
Figure 3.4: adapted from “Phases of Thematic Analysis” Nowell *et al.* (2017 p.4).

To begin the thematic analysis, and following King’s suggestion: “When searching for themes, the best place to start is with a few pre-defined codes to help guide analysis.” (Cassell and

Symon, 2004), the researcher then proceeded to identify the broad-ranging and prominent themes.

This was continued by carefully analysing the interview transcripts, thus allowing familiarisation with the data. Large printouts of 36 x 48 inches were generated for easier visualisation and integration of the concepts to increase the comprehensibility of each of the interview responses. With the use of sticky notes and highlighters, the researcher then reflected on the findings and used a coding framework that later allowed for the classification of the themes and a coherent interpretation of the data. It is worth mentioning that the use of large printouts allowed for an enhanced visual experience and enabled near-simultaneous interaction with each of the participants' responses while avoiding unnecessary scrolling up and down in a spreadsheet. Once the preliminary themes were recognised through the initial thematic analysis phase, the researcher created a summary explaining each of the main topics in a comprehensive way while keeping in mind the research question. This overview will be further explained in Chapter 4 – Section 4.2.

Twelve preliminary themes emerged from the literature review and the iterative process. These diverse themes were developed based on the participants' views and the concepts unveiled in current and past research. The emerging and relevant key elements captured the richness of the collected data, as participants shared various views on aspects related to the research question. These emerging themes led to interesting new areas for the literature review (such as diversity, equity, and inclusion), and subsequently allowed for a return to the research with a consolidated theoretical foundation. Figure 3.5 summarises the process used over the thematic analysis.



*Figure 3.5: Thematic Coding Approach Summary*

### **3.4.3. Using NVivo Software**

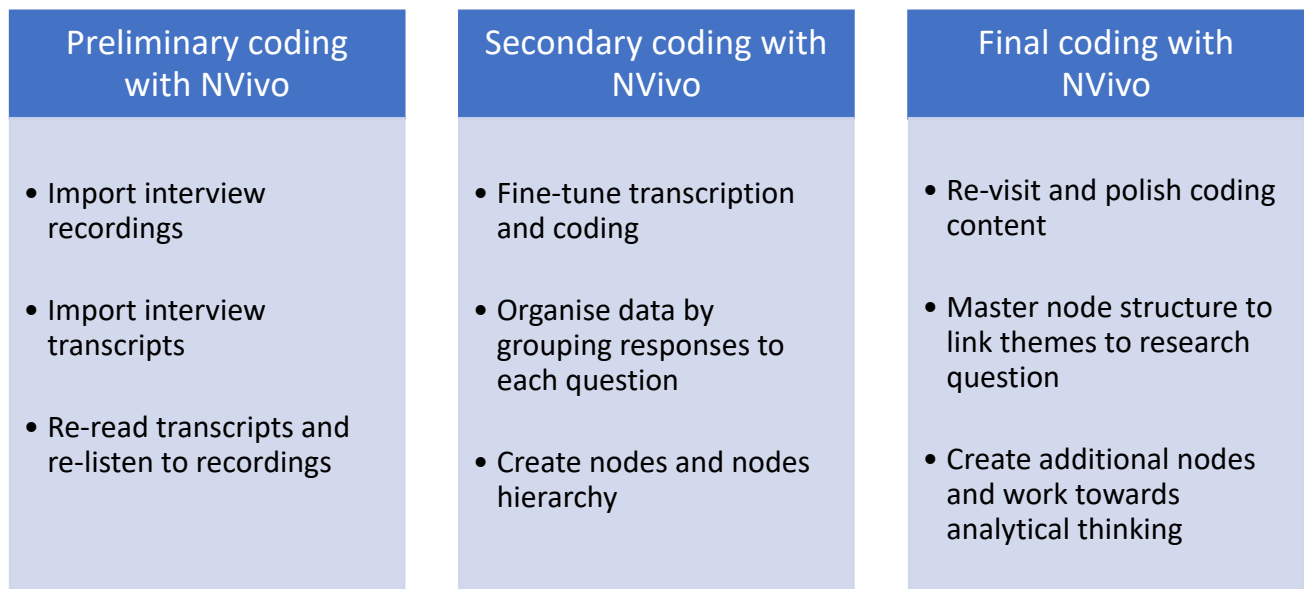
The second phase of the thematic analysis presented an aggregation of the categorised themes with the aim of developing a broad view of the relevant themes that were uncovered. Once all the interviews were loaded to NVivo version 12, the researcher began with the creation of nodes, which involved revisiting the initial data. Through using NVivo software, and by simultaneously revisiting his notes and reviewing content analysis, he discovered relevant information such as commonalities, differences, and correlations while bearing in mind the research question; all this was developed based on the participants' viewpoints and the local context, thus forming more consistent conceptual relationships.

The creation of the main themes came out as a result of this connected process in which the use of NVivo played a crucial role; this further understanding additionally led him to revisit new

areas of literature to later return to the research with a mature and consolidated theoretical foundation.

Using NVivo software not only allowed for deeper awareness and understanding of the various themes to be brought to light, but also facilitated the automated analysis of textual documents while reducing ambiguity, therefore enhancing the quality of the study.

Results show that with the use of this software, clearly articulated insights were produced, and more detailed information was discovered from the qualitative data. Moreover, the use of this research tool enabled the researcher not only to organise and analyse but also to store the data in an NVivo format. All of this translated into research conducted more efficiently while obtaining a deeper and more comprehensive analysis that drew clearer conclusions with robust research results.



*Figure 3.6: Systematic Analysis Process Using NVivo Software Version 12*



As argued by Attride-Stirling (2001), qualitative researchers need to demonstrate how data analysis is conducted via recording and systematising, as well as by disclosing the method of analysis in enough detail for the reader to determine that the process is a credible one.

Since the thematic coding process is highly flexible, using this technique provides the researcher with an approach that can provide a rich and detailed analysis of the data as argued by Braun and Clarke (2006); it is worth noting here that this technique is not a separate method but rather an approach to assist the researchers during data analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). In addition, by doing a rigorous thematic analysis, the findings have a higher degree of trustworthiness because this way a researcher can persuade him- or herself and the reader that their research findings are worthy of attention (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). A systematic examination of the different participant perspectives also served to highlight the differences and similarities encountered in the data that could potentially unearth any unanticipated findings to be portrayed during the production of the report (Cassell and Symon, 2004).

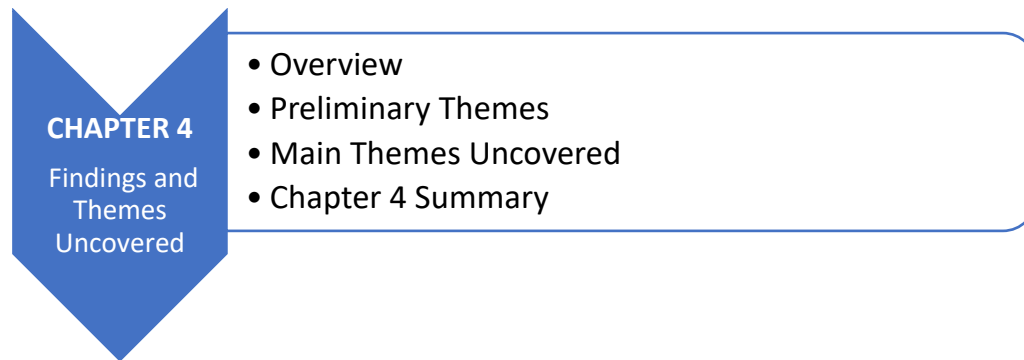
During this stage of data analysis, the researcher considered elements such as confirmability, dependability, and transferability, to provide evidence of the decisions and choices made that could serve readers as an audit trail. In this vein, confirmability refers to how the researcher's interpretations and findings are clearly derived from the data and how the conclusions have been reached. Dependability refers to how a researcher ensures that his or her research is clearly documented and that it has a logical process that is traceable, and transferability delves into how the researcher provide descriptions to the reader that could serve to transfer the findings to their own context (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). All elements gathered will be considered and presented in-depth in Chapter 4 – Findings and Themes Uncovered.

### ***3.5. Chapter 3 Summary***

In this chapter, the researcher outlined the philosophy, the methodology, and the research approach of the study. The researcher also explains how these three elements fit together and establishes the reasons why the various criteria were selected for this dissertation. The experience of the participants was vital and necessary for understand the factors that influenced the study. The coding procedure was followed to add objectivity and rigour while bringing a comprehensive understanding from multiple viewpoints to the research.

In the first section, the project's philosophical underpinnings were detailed; following a brief overview of the concept of phenomenology, its application in the context of IPA was discussed. In particular, the researcher noted the benefits of its experiential, qualitative approach in the context of this study: in considering interpersonal management roles, the comparison and consolidation of multiple perspectives is crucial. This aspect of consolidation, in addition to the need for a flexible yet precise method of grouping data, were elaborated upon in the second section concerning the research design, the target population, and research ethics approvals. The processes of choosing interviewees, obtaining interviews, following ethics guidelines, storing the data, and determining the themes of the data using analysis and qualitative research software were documented and explicated.

Finally, the aspects of data collection, the multi-level approach for data gathering and analysis were discussed in more detail in the last two sections. The researcher highlighted not only the rationale for particular choices, but also, practical aspects of the interview experience such as the methods used to select and interact with staff at the institution, the language of the initial survey, and the software used to conduct online interviews and sort the data. These aspects provide a grounding for the next chapter's discussion of this process in action, as the researcher will elaborate on the findings and the main themes uncovered.



*Figure 3.7: Chapter 4 Outline*

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND THEMES UNCOVERED**

### **4.0. Overview**

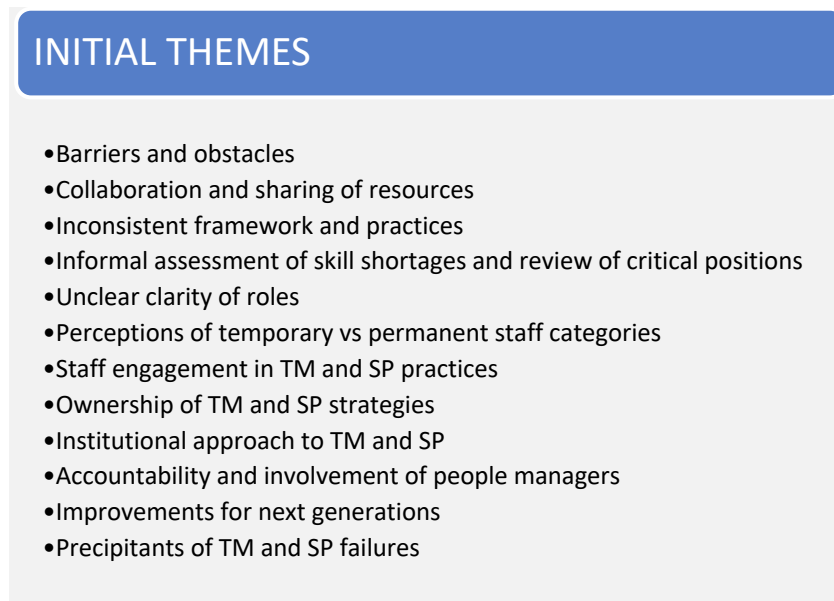
The following chapter provides a thorough description of the evidence gathered during the data collection stage. The researcher started by analysing the data using a multi-level approach that allowed him to identify multiple preliminary themes and narrow down topics to later consolidate them into main themes. This facilitated the framing of the discussions in relation to the context and the overarching research question.

As explained in Chapter 3 Section 3.4. - Multi-level Approach for Data Gathering, each of the preliminary themes were manually identified and individually assessed with the use of an Excel spreadsheet; subsequently, keywords and relevant findings were rigorously analysed in a precise and exhaustive manner, as well as, systematically categorised; thus, increasing the reliability of this qualitative research (Nowell *et al.* 2017). Second, to better situate the focus, and to support the research inquiry while providing a clear trail of evidence, the researcher embarked in the thematic coding process and the use of NVivo software to validate the initial findings, focus on depth and richness, and transform the data analysis into valuable insights that ultimately increased the credibility of the study. This approach helped the researcher to deal more effectively with the complexity of the coding process; once the data and the initial themes were analysed, the creation of the main themes became imminent.

Each of the main three themes uncovered are presented with insightful quotations that emanated from the interview process. These quotations capture the depth and richness of the participants' knowledge; furthermore, the chapter includes a reflective interpretation from the researcher to achieve a meaningful understanding of the findings and its context (Creswell, 2013).

## 4.1. Preliminary Themes

Throughout the thematic analysis process, the researcher assessed the coded data organically to determine whether the findings were grouped in a logical and coherent pattern. Using a zoom-in and zoom-out approach, each of the recurring themes were individually decoded to determine if the recurring topics accurately reflected the meanings that were evident in the data set. In other words, each of the twelve themes were analysed on a micro and macro scale to see if they fit as part of the whole, a process described in Section 4.2.: Themes Uncovered. The Figure 4.1. below provides a summary of the twelve preliminary themes that emerged from the initial thematic coding:



*Figure 4.1: Initial Themes*

At the end of the initial thematic analysis phase, a much-refined version of the themes encountered was produced. The goal of this approach was to visualise the preliminary themes and creatively think about how the parts fit together, following the thought of Nowell *et al.* (2017)

## 4.2. Main Themes Uncovered

As described earlier, the interview questions included several elements of TM and SP practices. Upon examination of all the research questions, the researcher was able to assess and track current strategies employed at the institution where this study took place; the questions were designed to unveil the criteria used by this institution and determine how TM and SP practices are exercised, developed, supported, and currently tracked. To systematically unveil the main themes, the initial themes were grouped into three sections to narrow down the essence of the participants' responses, which provided insightful findings. A detailed breakdown is provided in Figure 4.2:

### THEME 1 - BARRIERS AND OBSTACLES

- Policies and Outdated HR system
- Inconsistent Framework and Practices
- Informal Assessment of Skill Shortages and Review of Critical Positions
- Clarity of roles
- Perceptions of Temporary vs. Permanent Staff Categories
- Institutional Approach to TM and SP

### THEME 2 - COLLABORATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND OWNERSHIP

- Sharing of Resources and Cooperation
- Staff Engagement and Training
- Ownership of TM and SP Practices
- Accountability and Involvement of People Managers

### THEME 3 - INSIGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS

- Improvements for Next Generation of Managers
- Precipitants of TM and SP Failures

*Figure 4.2: Themes Uncovered*

## **4.2.1. Theme 1 - Barriers and Obstacles that Prevent Implementation of TM and SP Frameworks**

### **4.2.1.1. Policies and Outdated HR System**

Based on the results obtained, the participants maintained that there is no current TM and SP framework implemented in the institution where this research took place. They also reported that although there is great awareness about TM and SP practices, a sustained commitment to these processes is lacking. Their answers capture insightful suggestions about a prospective TM and SP framework that could be potentially implemented at this institution. The comments related to these practices, grouped into categories, are recorded below.

Some participants say there are *too many policies*; they expressed their views as follows:

*“My managers are aware of TM & SP, but they’re not involved. Typically, each faculty has its procedures and gives employees different types of opportunities. This all depends on the department’s approach, as it changes in every faculty. Each unit operates differently, some things get lost in translation along the way, and unfortunately, a lot has to do with policies.”*

*Participant 1*

*“From an HR perspective, we are committed to promoting succession planning within these institutions, but the difficulty is that we have a highly decentralised operation; there is a need for updated policies and regulations to facilitate succession planning. The topic is considered as a - nice thing to have - but gets [over] shadowed in the process.” Participant 4*

*“Succession planning is something I always think about. I believe in setting the environment for performance dialogue by practice; however, we don't have a formal process and we also have*

*some staff members that don't want to move or don't have the interest in succeeding anyone."*

*Participant 6*

*"In terms of immediate barriers and obstacles, a lot has to do with policies." Participant 2*

*"Culture and policies are different." Participant 5*

*"Policies could be updated to reflect twenty-first-century practices." Participant 10*

Another participant mentioned that more *support from senior managers* is needed; his/her views are expressed as follows:

*"You have to have the support of senior administration so that it is encouraged to be pushed down the hierarchical scheme. Every faculty operates differently. Depending on the department the approach changes." Participant 3*

All participants maintain that currently there are no tools to track TM and SP processes:

*"We need tools to track people in their career; we need to know all the training and formal education that employees have. Particularly, we need tools and resources to track everything that has to do with succession planning for it to work." Participant 7*

*"Our current system is for sure a failure as it is obsolete and has no way to integrate TM and SP on it." Participant 8*

*"There are very high expectations about the new system, so I am hoping that it will help us in the long run. The one we currently have is outdated and does not talk with the finance system. I think a lot of the problem has to do with the old system we have in place. There is no system or mechanism for keeping track. Our operation is too big, we are just too much of a big machine." Participant 10*



*“We are hoping that the new system we're going to have will encourage more communication; therefore, that [it] is a way to integrate both the system and the communication so that it matches the move towards team collaboration and eventually TM and SP.” Participant 12*

*“Our old system has very limited functionality. I hope the new system could take care of some of our pains. Unfortunately, the succession planning module will be part of the following phase. It will be interesting to see the new platform and touch and feel its benefits. Ideally, not only one unit or faculty should have access to the information and keep it for themselves, but rather to share it across the university. Each of our teams has to work with managers. There is also a need to have accountability across the university. Also, a cultural change needs to happen.”*

*Participant 9*

*“We currently have an obsolete system. With my previous employer, the HR Department was always looking at how to develop their employees and I don't see the same type of effort done in our institution. My manager does a great job in talking to all of us and is always keeping us in the loop yet, I know this is not the norm across our faculty and in the overall institution. It seems that everyone is looking forward to the system, but I believe the system is one thing, but also the policies and procedures need to be updated to make sure they go in line with the new software; otherwise, we will have the system, but policies will not be in alignment with it.” Participant 6*

*“The current system is not capable of managing internal succession. We do not keep track of strong performers on a system level, plus the problem is our current organisational tracking system. The organisation is not capable of managing organisational growth” Participant 11*

*“You need the right tools and the right performance evaluation. You also need a centralised program spearheaded by HR (central and local), so I think it is a mix.” Participant 9*

**4.2.1.2. Inconsistent Framework and Practices**

The interviews also revealed that 9 out of the 12 participants believe there is some inconsistency related to TM and SP frameworks. As illustrated in the quotations below, the current practices are not effective, as several obstacles are being encountered. These barriers range from inconsistent policies and outdated HR systems to bureaucracy and lack of opportunities. As summarised in Table 3, some of the barriers that participants face include the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of opportunities</li> <li>• Not enough managerial levels</li> <li>• Misleading policy about salary increase</li> <li>• Applicability of training and relevant skills</li> <li>• No pool of internal candidates</li> <li>• Unconscious bias in the hiring process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural differences</li> <li>• Hiring preference between internal versus external candidates</li> <li>• Hiring academics as administrators</li> <li>• No exit interviews</li> <li>• Some faculties have larger budgets</li> <li>• The ability to move is not equal across all faculties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not enough emphasis on work-life balance</li> <li>• No proper onboarding protocols, or only informal ones</li> <li>• Better retention policy,</li> <li>• Internal knowledge is not valued as much</li> <li>• Too much bureaucracy</li> <li>• Underrepresentation of visible minorities</li> </ul>
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*Table 3: Summary of obstacles that prevent TM and SP*

As the researcher integrated the observation notes gathered through the interview process, he came to realise the richness of the participants’ responses, which led him to appreciate how the observation process is much more comprehensive than simply documenting or recording participants’ answers.

Despite the candidates' awareness of the key elements of TM and SP practices, it appears that they are currently facing challenges when it comes to the review of skill shortages and critical positions.

When asked about the current performance evaluation tool currently used by the institution, the participants expressed that there are some inconsistencies with this evaluation mechanism. Currently, the way the institution evaluates its staff reflects that this assessment tool is not implemented uniformly across all faculties and units, its usage is not clearly documented, the tool is misused for salary compensation and lastly, it is not mandatory for all departments. All of the participants agree that they are familiar with the current performance evaluation; however, they mention the following concerns and suggestions:

*"I am familiar with the current performance evaluation system yet it's not very clear, lacks clarity and interpretation, some training is needed, people don't see value to do it, so a vicious circle is created." Participant 9*

*"Yes, I am aware, but I think there is essentially no system, the performance evaluation is done at an individual level and 360 reviews could be beneficial." Participant 3*

*"I am familiar with it, and I know it's not mandatory for all units across the institution. Hopefully, it will be mandatory with the new system; I also believe the performance evaluation is flawed and subjective. In the current system, salary and performance get mixed, and these are very different things. They should be treated separately." Participant 4*

*"Yes, performance dialogue is done at an individual level, and we touch base not only once a year but rather through the year. Performance dialogue is done for permanent staff, so everyone gets to do it. The system is clearly documented but its usage is not." Participant 6*

*“If the performance dialogue is done properly, it is an absolutely critical tool to keep employees engaged, have them know what’s expected of them, and also have them know when and where the recognition comes.” Participant 12*

*“Performance evaluation needs to be done individually because it is not fair to be judged as a group.” Participant 1*

*“Currently individual [evaluation is done], but it would make a difference if the performance dialogue is done at both levels. They tried once without success. It should include the individual and also the team performance, as both are linked together.” Participant 2*

*“Current evaluation is done at an individual level, doing a team evaluation could be very interesting and something to be introduced to demonstrate how we function as a team. I remember studying these approaches in one of my classes so it could be interesting and potentially beneficial to implement.” Participant 5*

*“When I was at a clerical level, no one ever mentioned anything about my performance. That term is only used with managers.” Participant 7*

*“My performance dialogue is done at the individual level. In my previous job, this was done both individually and as a group; the range of feedback was great, and then managers could get a real insight into how someone is performing. Our institution should look at how people are evaluated in the outside world, and not only in academic institutions.” Participant 8*

#### **4.2.1.3. Informal Assessment of Skill Shortages and Review of Critical Positions**

The current strategies used to review skill shortages and critical positions within the organisation indicate that there are incongruities when it comes to replacing an individual who is retiring, on temporary absence, or is leaving the institution.

Key roles are evaluated differently across the university, and participants mentioned that the model is considerably decentralised. As highlighted in the quotations below, the participants expressed that the current approach is a reactive one; arrangements emerge only when there is an immediate need, and, as a result, it is only when an individual leaves, that units take a step back to assess the needs and roles for the new replacement.

*“It is a challenge because information cannot be fully accessed and made available; for example, access to privileged information is limited and sometimes it is hard to get the full context.”*

*Participant 1*

*“The environment is very competitive. Now we recruit; however, in the past, people were coming to us.” Participant 2*

*“It is a challenge to review critical positions because we are a big organisation. The work in our unit is somehow transactional and there are always staff shortages.” Participant 3*

*“Skill shortages and critical positions are reviewed differently across the university. We have a very decentralised model.” Participant 4*

*“It is not only looking at the immediate need but also to the future.” Participant 5*

*“Positions are reviewed whenever someone leaves or whenever someone is promoted; there needs to be a process in place to download all the knowledge and information from an employee who is retiring.” Participant 8*

*“Our institution is very political and complicated.” Participant 10*

#### **4.2.1.4. Clarity of Roles**

When asked about why TM and SP topics should be clearly documented, six out of twelve participants responded that TM and SP should be recorded for all of the following:

1. For training and development purposes
2. For retention strategy purposes
3. For motivation and engagement purposes
4. For team building and leadership purposes
5. To clarify employee role requirements

It is interesting to note that when asked to choose only one factor from the list mentioned just above, five out of twelve participants agreed that the most important aspect of the five options provided pertains to *training and development purposes*. In the participants' own words:

*"Training is the most important factor because this allows employees to continue growing in their career, to continue learning new skills, to acquire emotional intelligence, learn how to manage people in teams, etc." Participant 8*

Two candidates expressed that retention strategy purposes were the most important factor; besides, another two participants said that the most crucial aspect related to motivation and engagement purposes. Two more staff members stated that the most relevant category had to do with the clarification of employee roles and requirements. Lastly, only one candidate said that the most important reason why TM and SP should be documented pertained to team building and leadership purposes.

When asked why retention strategy purposes was the most important category, four candidates maintained:

*“Overtime each employee accumulates a huge amount of experience and knowledge. If you lose experienced employees, the good ones, then you lose a chunk of your institution.” Participant 11*

*“We don’t want to lose years of accumulated experience because suddenly someone retired instead of transferring the knowledge.” Participant 5*

*“Retention is the most important because the cost of training and then losing employees is extremely high for an organisation. Employers have to show themselves as a good and stable option.” Participant 3*

*“In my experience, we know how to recruit management; however, we don't know how to keep it. There seems to be too much turnover. Succession planning is zero. If you look at my unit from four to five years ago, you'll realise that there is too much turnover. It is hard to get good people with the right skill set. Something is lacking.” Participant 10*

The other two participants emphasised how motivation and engagement purposes were the predominant factor; they conveyed the following idea:

*“As you go up the ladder, responsibility changes; perhaps new skills are required and politics become more crucial; therefore, developing teams and motivating them also plays an important role.” Participant 8*

As the interview progressed and two of the participants discussed why clarifying employee roles and requirements was the most relevant category to them, they provided the insights below:

*“Clarifying roles and employee requirements is the most important factor because it will give us the path to better understand unit objectives to later clarify expectations and then to provide the necessary training” Participant 12*

*“You will be able to revisit and validate what staff has done, and what they are missing, and all of this to be done holistically.” Participant 6*

Finally, one participant maintained that the most important reason why TM and SP should be documented is related to team building and leadership purposes. The staff member provided the observation below:

*“Concerning team building, the more someone knows, the better they are to the unit and the institution as a whole. This is a complex organisation where there are multiple and ever-changing variables, included but not limited to variability in staff programs, budgets, and bureaucratic factors.” Participant 9*

#### **4.2.1.5. Perceptions of Temporary versus Permanent Staff**

When asked if temporary staff are regarded in the same way as permanent staff, four staff members answered in the affirmative, while six staff members said that temporary staff are not considered the same way and two staff members were not entirely sure; their answers were not clear. The six participants that mentioned that temporary staff were not perceived the same way as permanent staff reported that permanent staff have more advantages. In addition, the participants maintained that staff categories are considered differently depending on the person’s background and skillset, and that temporary staff do not necessarily have the same type of recognition. In the participants’ own words:

*“I believe temporary staff are pretty much left out; usually they are not part of any performance evaluation.” Participant 4*



*“Temporary staff will not have the same recognition and are not perceived the same.”*

*Participant 1*

*“I don’t have a lot of time at this institution, but from what I have seen, I believe the temporary staff have access to some training, but they are in a way left out and often are not considered in the same way as full-time employees; in addition, temporary staff do not follow a performance evaluation, and only do some basic assessment after their probationary period.” Participant 8*

*“I think there is an undisclosed and inherent bias.” Participant 12*

*“Unfortunately, not. I do feel that sometimes temporary people are considered a secondary class. Even though they are amazing I do think that within the institution there are several classes of citizens and those with permanent positions are on the top of the food chain. If you are a casual on soft funds, you then know you are at the bottom of the barrel and maybe not even visible.”*

*Participant 9*

*“Temporary staff are not perceived the same. If you go out and fill a position to be a casual or to be in a contract full-time there is a difference.” Participant 10*

In contrast, four participants stated that both staff categories are indeed recognised in the same way. They maintain that when a staff member is hired for either a temporary or a permanent position, they look for the same skill sets, and they have the same expectations no matter whether the position is for a short or long period of time. They also maintain that the balance between risk and reward is equal and that both categories are treated the same, although, in some cases, they have different operating funds. They also argue that “talent is talent” as a way to exemplify that talent has no gender, age, or shape, and that a diversity mindset benefits everyone in the organisation. As a result, both categories are subject to the same kind of activities. According to these participants, there is no distinction besides signing a yearly contract. Below are the participants’ insights:

*"In my department, we try to refer to people as regular staff rather than permanent staff because I think it could be misleading. I would not see much difference at least in our unit. Typically, temporary positions can be filled for two years, and then, the tendency is that the position stays and becomes regular." Participant 3*

*"Yes, both [types of] staff members are perceived the same way. When we hire someone for a temporary or permanent position, we look for the same skills and we have the same expectations no matter if it's only for a short period of time; risk and reward are the same, and there has been a change in time to narrow the gap between both groups." Participant 2*

*"I don't see a difference between those two staff categories, and I think all faculties should use the same approach." Participant 5*

*"We treat both staff categories the same." Participant 6*

By contrast, a participant from the first group maintains:

*"The difference may be related to developmental opportunities and that, for example, a permanent staff member may have access to more training and may be able to easily grow from one level to another." Participant 4*

Another candidate mentioned that there may be a difference depending on the type of temporary position and on the individual's experience. The participant highlights that external candidates have higher expectations than internal ones; nevertheless, he/she believes that more and more, both staff categories are starting to demand equality.

*"I guess there is a difference, but it is more in terms of opportunities. You know, someone that is permanent has more access to opportunities versus a temporary position. The difference is in terms of how easily they can grow from one level to another. Training is not offered to temporary*

*staff because they are temporary, which often means that you do not necessarily want to invest in someone temporary. I don't necessarily think that is the best mentality, because temporary staff most likely will become permanent staff even if it is not in your unit."* Participant 7

#### **4.2.1.6. Institutional Approach to TM and SP**

As the interview progressed to a very important stage, the candidates were consulted about the causes of success or failure in their current talent management system. Upon examination of the data related to this topic, the researcher noticed that almost all participants listed at least one cause of failure. For example, the candidates maintained that clear boundaries between administrative staff and academic staff are necessary; they also questioned the lack of synchronicity between *the why* and *the how* concerning TM and SP implementation and applicability.

Additionally, the participants highlighted that it is important to learn how to make stronger choices regarding accountability and staff recognition. In the candidates' own words:

*"I do not think we have a proper succession planning system in place. Hiring external costs at least twice as much as internal candidates. Internal candidates already know the politics, culture, and have built a network of contacts across our institution; it is a matter of cost-effectiveness."*  
Participant 4

Furthermore, the interviews revealed that there is no oversight by the central HR unit and that most of the problems were related to the old system. One of the candidates said:

*"The future kind of depends on the units' and managers' mentality."* Participant 7

Similarly, another participant incorporated additional feedback such as:

*“Our current system is for sure a failure.” Participant 8*

Lastly, a common observation voiced during the interview relates to the fact that excellent training programs are offered by their organisational development unit, a division of HR, but it appears that the core of the problem pertains to not knowing how to put into practice the skills learned, and therefore, put learning into action.

According to the responses, and as per the participants’ observations described above, here is where the organisation struggles and lacks efficacy. More specifically, the data reflects that numerous trained and capable individuals across the different faculties have not only taken courses and relevant training but also have the appropriate education and experience to be challenged in their career; however, the opportunities for them to put learning into practice are often lacking. In the participants’ own words:

*“We offer great training programs but then to use that talent is where we lag. Streaming these trained employees to use their recently acquired skills could be something quite interesting for our institution, considering that training also needs to be aligned with what they are going to do. In turn, when they go and learn then you, as a manager, have to put it to use.” Participant 11*

A key moment of inquiry presented the opportunity to contribute to the current institutional approach to TM. One of the elements that resonated deeply with the researcher during the data review pertained to the division among candidates in a one-to-one even ratio when asked about their unit’s engagement in TM and SP exercises. Furthermore, the inconsistency was also highlighted in the participants’ answers when asked to define their current institutional approach to TM.

For example, three individuals out of twelve suggested that the current institutional approach to TM is bureaucratic. Another four participants indicated that the current attitude towards TM is individualistic; then, the remaining five candidates specified that the current institutional approach to TM is mixed between bureaucratic and individualistic.

None of the candidates suggested that their current talent management strategies reflect a participative or a collaborative team approach. In the participants' own words:

*"Bureaucratic because there are too many policies and often it takes a lot of time and effort to change something." Participant 8*

*"We are very bureaucratic at a high level." Participant 10*

*"Individualistic because when a unit has somebody good, they don't want anybody else to know about it because they want to keep it for themselves. We need to look at it as an organisational asset and not as one unit." Participant 5*

*"I would say, currently, it's a mix of both (individualistic and bureaucratic), it depends on the administration at the time." Participant 6*

Pondering these findings helped me recognise how important it is to take a moment to reflect on the participants' responses as they relate to the observation of potential suitable, uniform, and consistent institutional approaches to TM. Upon examination of the research question related to the current performance evaluation, and whether or not it was done on an individual or a team level, it was thought-provoking to find that ten out of twelve candidates indicated that the current performance evaluation was done only at an individual level. The remaining two participants were unsure; their answers reflected hesitation and confusion.

In some way, the findings disconfirm the notion that the units actively engage in TM and SP exercises. By comparing the data, the researcher perceived in the candidates' responses that there existed ambiguity and inconsistency related to departmental engagement in TM and SP efforts.

For example, six out of twelve participants indicated that their units do not engage in TM and SP planning exercises; by contrast, the remaining six participants indicated the contrary. The quotes below highlight this contradiction:

*"I think we don't do enough on the TM exercises because HR teams don't have the time, tools, and the manpower to do it all. SP exercises are done at the last minute when someone is already retired, or very close to retiring, to the point that there's not even enough time to download all of the information and processes for the new staff member to be able to take on the new role."*  
Participant 6

*"We talk about this topic as we know it is part of self-development."* Participant 3

*"My unit engages in these exercises (TM and SP). For instance, my unit encouraged me to participate in a series of workshops where you're able to meet different people, network, learn things, and this is something that came directly from my unit."* Participant 1

This division into an equal 1:1 ratio interferes and limits the overall understanding of the current context; this is where further research into this specific topic could be enlightening, as it would allow for a deeper qualitative inquiry and, ultimately, arrive at a better understanding of the participants' perceptions around TM and SP planning.

## **4.2.2. Theme 2 – Collaboration, Engagement, and Ownership**

### **4.2.2.1. Sharing of Resources and Cooperation**

Upon examination of the data through systematic coding, there seems to be a disagreement among participants about the topic of *collaboration and sharing of resources*. Some participants indicated that collaboration happens spontaneously, and the sharing of resources is encouraged in their department; however, other participants stated that information is only made available at a local level and not shared across the board. The quotes below exemplify the need for more efforts concerning institutional data sharing:

*“I think we need to devote more efforts concerning data sharing, as an institution. We offer programs or we train staff with specialised skills such as the Leadership Development Program, and then once they graduate, they are not pulled together. They could be pulled together to fix issues at the unit or faculty level.” Participant 10*

*“Data at our institution is not shared across the board so we need to develop strategies to be more transparent and share information and data as we have it. We could have ambassadors or champions working across the university to meet this goal.” Participant 9*

*“HR information is only shared at a very local level. It is a small community even though we have a lot of staff. There is no formal process. At one point we had a mentorship program as a pilot, but I think it has gone dormant for a bit. Mentoring modules in the new system could enhance sharing of data and collaboration.” Participant 6*

*“I think we are not hugely collaborative; more sharing of resources is needed.” Participant 12*

*“It is a challenge to keep talent and share talent.” Participant 5*

*"We are hesitant to share within the university." Participant 3*

*"On the surface, we seem to be collaborative but in reality, not so much." Participant 4*

By contrast, other candidates revealed that cooperation and sharing are done on a voluntary basis by colleagues and supervisors. In addition, one participant highlights the importance of accountability, as it is crucial to have the tools and support to be able to determine how the unit is doing. More specifically, and in the participants' own words:

*"Our institution somewhat encourages collaboration and sharing of resources. I think we do try to collaborate and share resources within our unit, and we always collaborate with central and work together with them so that we use efficiently the resources we have." P6*

*"Yes, sharing of resources is encouraged." Participant 3*

*"There needs to be accountability. You need to be able to have the tools and share the data. Then have that ownership or accountability to say, this is what I have learned, this is where I am, and this is how my unit is doing." Participant 5*

*"I think it is a case-by-case basis, as this is a very decentralised type of institution. In our office, we do share resources because when we onboard new staff, they do not have support when they start. So, we share our resources to support them until they have the right people in place." Participant 2*

#### **4.2.2.2. Staff Engagement and Training**

When asked about how often staff engage and talk about TM and SP practices with either their direct supervisors, HR champion, unit head, or dean, it appears that nine out of twelve participants have had at least one informal type of conversation related to this topic; in



contrast, three participants expressed that they never talk about it. One finding that was unveiled in this inquiry relates to the fact that when a formal conversation takes place, it is only via an employees' annual performance evaluation. Below are participants' remarks:

*"We talk about it at least once a year in the performance evaluation. Besides that formal meeting, additional feedback is given only in an informal way." Participant 1*

*"Yes, I talk about this topic as much as I can during informal conversations." Participant 2*

*"We talk about it with everyone at least once a year. However, we don't talk about it in any other formal way plus we do not talk about it often." Participant 3*

*"The topic is always there; managers and superiors are becoming more aware and having more discussions around the topic." Participant 4*

*"Yes, I talk about it in my group, but I think we need to demystify the concept of SP because people look at it as "nice to have", but I think it is much more than that. This is a true reality and necessity; therefore, I do bring this topic up very often in our leadership meetings now and then." Participant 5*

*"I work in close collaboration with my dean and HR advisor, we trust each other, and we often talk about the needs for our faculty. Since plans are always dynamic, we often look for new ways to adapt and respond [to be] more agile and efficient." Participant 6*

*"My manager often talks about these topics and from time to time he/she shares some good articles about different management topics that are quite interesting. Our dean also talks about it, perhaps once a year, when we do our faculty strategic exercise." Participant 8*

*"We do it regularly. We have our group of directors, and we talk about retention and SP. We also look at the structure of our unit because we are a big unit with a lot of people. We are very mindful*

*of employee engagement, and we always try to ensure positions are properly filled with proper staff. We also look at employees' workload to make sure we are balanced, and we give opportunities to those that are looking for it so that we can all grow together. It is part of our day-to-day operations." Participant 11*

Surprisingly, when asked about how often the HR champion talks about TM and SP, the participants were divided on a 1:1 ratio. For example, six candidates out of twelve indicated that they never talk with their HR champion about TM and SP. The other six candidates maintain that they do it every year; others, every month; and some do it regularly.

The candidates who often talk about TM and SP with their HR champion said the following:

*"Yes, I talk about the topic as much as I can during informal conversations." Participant 2*

*"Yes, we talk about it with everyone at least once a year." Participant 1*

*"Yes, the topic is always there at different levels." Participant 4*

*"The topic is often discussed by the HR champion, but there is still this stigma that the topic is nice to have but is not something that simple nor doable." Participant 5*

*"I work very closely with the HR advisor, and we trust each other. She/He usually seeks what my approach would be on something, and we align our approach since we share the same philosophy." Participant 6*

*"We meet monthly, and we talk about standing items or pending discussions. We use the time to talk about how we are doing as a team, and we also update all staff with management news and HR updates." Participant 12*

By contrast, the other six participants surprisingly mentioned that they do not talk about TM and SP topics regularly. Some participants expressed that it is only departmental chairs that embark on this topic; others mentioned that the subject is brought up during hiring only, but not during conversations related to career development. Some mentioned that these topics are considered when there are grievances and that, generally, a more structured approach is necessary. One candidate mentioned that currently the HR unit is overwhelmed with the operational side of things and that a proper strategic approach to TM and SP is lacking; lastly, another candidate maintained that currently there are no opportunities to express themselves when discussing TM and SP practices. The participants' responses are captured below:

*"It is only the departmental chair that talks about it. HR is not involved." Participant 3*

*"I never talk with my HR champion about this topic. We talk about it during hiring but nothing regarding career development for staff." Participant 10*

*"I don't think our HR champion talks about it ever. They are the ones processing the hiring and dealing with grievances and day-to-day operations, but I don't think they look at career development, which is very sad. A new structure should be implemented so that they are accountable for it." Participant 8*

*"Unfortunately, not so much. I do feel that right now they are extremely overwhelmed with the operational side of things but that overall, we are lacking a strategic HR vision. We need a proper HR process, and I don't think this is only the HR champions but rather as a whole." Participant 9*

*"Those topics are not discussed with us. Decisions are only passed down to us and we have no voice in the process." Participant 11*

*"I would say that it is the whole unit who lives by the decisions that they make, but there is no opportunity to express ourselves to that extent." Participant 7*

Regarding staff training, the conversation with participants produced interesting information related to employee development. Participants within the organisation said that the training they attend typically relates to topics they are interested in. Occasionally, their units would ask employees to attend specific trainings; however, this does not usually happen in the context of individual development and preparation to occupy a more senior role. Often, training is promoted and encouraged for operational needs.

In line with the declaration above, one participant explained the following:

*“In my previous role I got more coaching and mentoring. In our institution, the focus is on workshops and not real mentoring. A lot of different workshops and circles and things like that are meant for the person that self-identifies and then registers for these trainings. I think the trainings are wonderful, but what is missing is someone tapping on your shoulder and saying: you know, let me also coach you and guide you.” Participant 6*

By contrast, other participants stressed the importance of individual development:

*“The training that I have received to increase my potential to develop into a more senior role has been done by my own initiative.” Participant 2*

*“No, I haven't received formal training to increase my potential. Most of my growth is for self-development and individual commitment.” Participant 9*

There was also evidence that came from another participant who raised the following:

*“We have the opportunity to attend conferences, additional training, and to explore other areas of our domain. Growth opportunities are limited due to the size of our team.” Participant 4*

In general, the participants were very precise in sharing that staff members are not encouraged to develop themselves into a more senior role. They also say that in terms of planning, there are no formal staff development strategies at an institutional level where employees are provided clarity and step-by-step guidelines in an effective employee development plan.

A general idea that transpired from this theme, relates to the notion that to move forward, employees need to be intrinsically motivated and then make an effort to engage.

The candidates maintained:

*"You need to put the additional time in and do your part." Participant 5*

*"I went back to school when I was 50 years old to obtain a certification that was preventing me from moving forward. I then got into the order of administrators. It is all about perseverance, personal choice, and personal will." Participant 10*

#### **4.2.2.3. Ownership of TM and SP Practices**

It appears that there was some division between the participants when asked who the ultimate owner of the TM and SP strategies should be. Here, the participants had to choose from the four options below when asked about ownership:

- 1) Supervisor
- 2) Unit Director
- 3) HR Champion
- 4) HR Central

Next, four participants agreed that HR central should be the ultimate owner. Similarly, another four participants said that it should be a combination of either a supervisor and central HR, a combination of both HR units (central and local), or a combination of HR advisor and unit director. In addition to the comments of those eight candidates, two participants maintained that their supervisor should be the ultimate owner of TM and SP. One participant said that the unit director should be the ultimate owner, and one last participant said that it should be the local HR champion. While analysing the transcripts, the researcher was able to appreciate the diversity and variety of the different approaches encountered in the answers.

One thought-provoking detail that arose from the analysis of the interview transcript pertains to the fact that the four participants who chose a combination (supervisor, unit director, HR champion, or HR central), agree that HR (either central or local) plays an important role related to the process of ownership. The comments below highlight why, according to the staff members, HR plays such an important part:

*“Everyone has a role to play at different levels and HR acts as a facilitator.” Participant 2*

*“Central HR should be responsible for the policies and then action should cascade down to the local HR.” Participant 4*

*“There is a confidentiality aspect to HR professionals that needs to be respected especially in an area like TM and SP, so I think it should be HR at a champion level because HR at an institutional level is not familiar with the talent within a faculty/department. HR can and should devote time to knowing what our employees are doing and the talent they bring inside out.” Participant 5*

*“HR central should be the ultimate owner of TM and SP because they can get rid of some of the barriers like the silos between units.” Participant 1*

*"I think it should be a mix of HR central to provide guidelines and HR champions to motivate managers to talk with staff about TM and SP. It is not a one-man show, but rather an integrated approach." Participant 6*

One of the participants summarised the importance of teamwork in such a context:

*"You cannot point to one person to make all of those decisions. You need to make sure that you have a team that consults, discuss, looks at differences, and knows what everyone brings to the table. This team can also agree on a TM and SP model, and then ensure that it is implemented across the board." Participant 12*

#### **4.2.2.4. Accountability and Involvement of People Managers**

Inquiring about the perceptions and attitudes of people managers regarding TM and SP practices, eleven candidates out of twelve, indicated that their direct supervisor does take ownership and accountability of the TM and SP strategies in their units.

According to the data analysed, TM and SP topics were often discussed in group meetings, both formally and informally; many participants indicated that some of these topics are discussed at retreats with staff members who belong to different categories in the hierarchical structure. Other participants mentioned that the approach to TM and SP is very reactionary, in the sense that often action is encouraged only when an issue reaches a critical point.

One overarching reflection provided by the candidates indicates that there is an open dialogue, there are team-building exercises implemented, and also, TM and SP topics are covered in some units not only from recruitment but also all the way to exit interviews. In summary, it appears there is consensus among the candidates regarding the ownership taken by supervisors. In the participants' own words:

*"The supervisor takes ownership, and the topic is discussed at an individual level and not in group meetings." Participant 1*

*"My supervisor takes ownership. It is less around succession; however, he/she acknowledges good work." Participant 3*

*"Yes, I take ownership and accountability of TM & SP strategies. The topic is discussed in our bi-weekly leadership meetings. I covered this topic from recruitment all the way to exit interviews." Participant 5*

*"Both my direct supervisor and our department director engage every so often on the TM topic. Sometimes it is discussed in group meetings and [other times] individually." Participant 8*

Then, once the next interview question was presented, the answer from all candidates rapidly conveyed the richness and variety of their approach, which motivated me to look for relevant information regarding *how*, specifically, they engaged during the year concerning the TM and SP topics; it was compelling to find clear engagement and comprehensive strategies used by different groups to support engagement around the TM and SP processes. These participants immediately responded in the following way:

*"I can definitely ask questions, look into available guidelines, make suggestions, etc., as the faculty encourages these all the time. Continuous engagement with direct reports is implemented using informal conversations at least once a day without using a mentoring or coaching approach." Participant 1*

*"I do engage during the year on this topic. It is me who tries to prioritise things but sometimes our HR charts are not up to date. I am normally the one leading that discussion as it is embedded in my role; suggestions are always welcome." Participant 7*



The participants from another unit provided the following comment:

*“Priorities are fleshed out and information is shared across the team. Unit goals are set in alignment with university goals.” Participant 4*

Similarly, the conversation with other members produced the following:

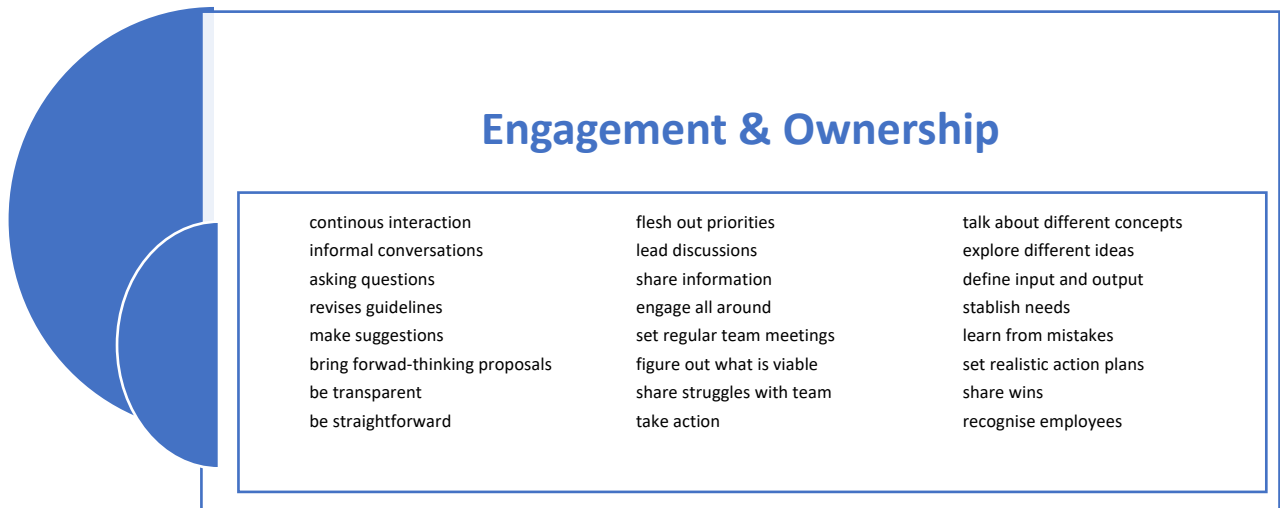
*“I engage individually and in weekly team meetings.” Participant 6*

*“Information is looked at on a yearly basis. Team discussion is not a top-down approach, but instead, it is a very active process in which we use information all around and not in a collect and file approach.” Participant 5*

Furthermore, one participant occupying a senior role said:

*“I share with my team all my struggles; I share my wins, my frustrations, and in this way, they can also see that we are all humans and that we work towards the same goals.” Participant 12*

With these declarations, the various strategies used to maintain engagement and promote ownership during the year concerning TM and SP topics were addressed. Figure 4.3 summarises the candidates' statements:



*Figure 4.3: Summary of Strategies Used to Maintain Engagement and Promote Ownership*

This multi-level approach engagement recommended by the participants is worth being considered and will be further explored in Chapter 5 - Discussion.

It is interesting to note that ten out of twelve participants who completed the interview process, agreed that currently there are appropriate communication mechanisms in place and documentation processes to talk about TM and SP topics. Only two candidates indicated that these kinds of discussions were often behind the scenes and that they would like to see their HR unit play a more active and objective role. Some of the communication mechanisms used by the candidates include the following:

- Work with institutional guidelines and preestablished procedures
- Remain fully aligned with university protocols
- Maintain consistency by following the usual channels of communication
- Pass down goals using the hierarchical structure
- Use formal communication mechanisms such as emails, individual, and weekly meetings

- Use performance evaluations to talk about TM and SP
- Conduct surveys once in a while
- Maintain verbal engagement

Despite the fact that participants previously indicated that their managers took ownership and accountability regarding TM and SP strategies, and also considering the successful communication mechanisms described just above, contradictory answers were obtained when asked about whether or not participants recently engaged with their supervisor to create a process and identify key components of a successful SP, in alignment with the organisation's vision.

Five participants explained that engagement and plans were implemented in the past year to support TM and SP best practices; however, four candidates reported that no planning and elaborated strategies were shared with them in that time. Lastly, the remaining three candidates did not provide clear answers and did not indicate if, in the last year, they engaged with their supervisor to create a process and identify key components of TM and SP. More specifically, and in the candidates' own words:

*"Yes, we engage with the supervisor and in our faculty, we have a process in place not only for the key components but also to make sure there is a smooth SP when the time comes. Also, we touch base numerous times through the year and our supervisors know exactly the interest of each of us including our short- and long-term plans in terms of career growth." Participant 6*

By contrast, other candidates maintained the following:

*"No, as mentioned before, the SP topic is mainly discussed between our directors and not at my level; I know they forecast and develop strategies about it but that is something that is not shared*

*with us unless someone in our immediate team is the one retiring or moving on to other job opportunities.” Participant 8*

The remaining three candidates provided ambiguous responses with a double meaning:

*“More or less. We started doing some exercises to improve communication, but the HR person got replaced and then the project was put on hold. Now with the COVID-19 pandemic, everything was put on hold again.” Participant 12*

At this point in the interview process, an important milestone was reached as the last section of the interview approached, which involved questions six through eight.

### ***4.2.3. Theme 3 – Insights and Implications***

#### ***4.2.3.1. Improvements for the Next Generation of Managers***

Next in the virtual interview was an inquiry about the improvements needed in the institution to better prepare the next generation of managers. Attentive to the participants' responses, the researcher has aimed to extract as many relevant details as possible, given the crucial nature of this topic.

Candidates indicate that there are several challenges. One of them is that people change roles too often. Many participants suggested that it is important to listen to what staff say, find a balance, provide mentorship programs, and facilitate relevant training so that employees can feel accomplished, remain committed, and maintain high motivation levels.

Besides, it appears that one immediate improvement pertains to the clarification around competencies, particularly, because it seems like there are too many competencies and they are too complicated to use. Other suggestions or immediate improvements include coaching, improving active listening skills, and developing an understanding of the manager's needs; also, participants highlight the importance of pulse checking with other institutions and organisations.

In the same vein, candidates indicate that looking at job descriptions, revising educational requirements (since they are very low), and being more selective about who is hired will guarantee better retention. They also mentioned that there needs to be a revision of the requirements for jobs because the expectations have grown on people. According to one participant, the institution has not adjusted its job requirements in a very long time and consequently needs to take a much more proactive approach to this.

Another participant said that it is crucial to identify those that are open to further training or who are skilled leaders, as well as letting them self-identify as candidates for promotion. He/she mentioned that to bring forward the next generation of managers, one needs to have a dual process that allows them to come into the system. For example, one can focus on talent acquisition as well as the development of the current workforce while promoting training programs that would be beneficial for the workforce.

A few other participants provided the following ideas in point form:

- Acquire needed training and tools
- Provide specialised training
- Have more coaching and support
- Have better integration between HR organisational development and faculties
- Establish a proper succession plan

- Embrace change and maintain trust
- Clarify expectations
- Have open dialogues
- Teach employees how to communicate
- Train employees on how to do succession planning
- Automate some processes
- Highlight accountability
- Emphasise quality in communication

To collaborate towards a TM framework, seven candidates indicated that they would emphasise processes instead of outcomes. Four out of twelve candidates said that they would emphasise outcomes instead of processes; only one candidate indicated that he/she would prefer to bring into focus both processes and outcomes. The candidates that chose processes over outcomes indicated the following:

*“I would lay emphasis in processes because outcomes are largely related to the process. There is more predictability if you focus on the process, that way you're able to control the outcome more.” Participant 2*

*“I would choose processes because outcomes are kind of irrelevant. This is because your outcome can be negative, but it is what you learn in the process. So, if your outcome is not desired then you know that whatever process you get needs to be changed. So, I would definitely lay emphasis on the process and not the outcome; you also need the right process with the right person at the right time.” Participant 7*

*“The process is the important one as long as you have the right process, and the outcome could be positive or negative. If needed, the process could also be revised but I think it would be a big mistake to reverse-engineer the process just to match the outcome.” Participant 8*

Finally, other candidates maintained that processes are crucial because, by defining a process, what is expected as an outcome will be known. According to one participant, if the policies and structure are not well defined, then, the desired outcome will not materialise. In other words, by putting emphasis on processes, there will be increased certainty that the outcome will be what is wanted. By contrast, four participants who indicated that outcomes were the priority mentioned the following:

*“I think outcomes. If you put too many processes in place, it becomes too bureaucratic. Nobody wants to participate in it at all because there are just way too many hoops. Having too many processes can be very discouraging.” Participant 6*

Lastly, one candidate emphasised the importance of both outcomes and processes. In his/her own words:

*“We talk about the outcome and the process. Meaning, if I'm selling it to higher management, I have to explain it differently; the bottom line is all about outcomes and talent management, regardless of how you do it. If I'm going downwards, I want to sell on the process, because I have to give them the skills on how to ensure it happens.” Participant 11*

When asked about whether or not candidates received training on how to increase their potential to develop into a more senior role, surprisingly, seven candidates out of twelve indicated that they had not received such a training period, only two candidates indicated that they had indeed been provided developmental opportunities and training, and three candidates were unsure, providing unclear answers.

One common idea that was unveiled in this section is that most of the development was related to their initiative—things that candidates had done on their own. The participants who

provided unclear answers maintain that there were plenty of opportunities to attend conferences and to take training, particularly that which focused on operational needs. Moreover, despite the available workshops and training, what is missing is having another individual “tapping on your shoulder, coaching, and mentoring you,” so the emphasis and focus is on workshops and not on real mentoring.

Surprisingly, almost all candidates indicated that they do feel comfortable about making suggestions and proposing improvements in their current work environment. Only one candidate said the following:

*“It depends. Normally, it is always sensitive. There are times when you need to question your supervisor’s style on their decisions. You need to be careful about how you do it and the way you hear it. If it’s about my staff and my colleagues, then I’m very comfortable.” Participant 11*

A few comments that transpired from the eleven candidates who felt comfortable making suggestions provide evidence of the following:

- Open communication is encouraged
- Staff are welcome to propose solutions
- Faculties value opinions and ideas
- There is trust and open confidence
- Units are very open and always try to share what they learn
- Units look for feedback and advice from all levels
- Units are very strong on sharing and helping out

At this point, the researcher moved to the next topic, which discussed the identification of the value of internal talent to attain intra-organisational growth. The first question aimed to unveil whether or not the current HR tracking system was able to manage organisational growth.



Compellingly, all candidates who participated in the interview indicated that their current system is not capable of managing intra-organisational growth. Some of the reasons that participants presented include the following:

*“No, our current system is not capable of managing organisational growth. I hope the new system is capable because we need to have something that helps the university identify talents and promote them.” Participant 1*

*“No, I should say in a very limited way and we’re working on her soccer project to have our in-house service to complement the information we have about our staff.” Participant 2*

*“No, our current system is not capable of tracking that or giving us real data.” Participant 3*

*“We currently have an obsolete system.” Participant 8*

*“The current HR system is not capable of managing intra-organisational growth. In my unit, we use an Excel spreadsheet; the process is more informal.” Participant 10*

*“No, the current system is not capable of managing internal succession. Unfortunately, we do not identify strong performers. We do not keep track of them on a system level.” Participant 11*

*“The problem is our current organisational tracking system. The HR platform is not capable of managing organisational growth.” Participant 12*

After obtaining these answers, the researcher proceeded to explore the next topic with a clear intention of grasping the candidates’ opinions on what activities they would develop to engage and motivate teams if they were in a senior role. The participants provided very rich insights about the strategies that could potentially be implemented to support TM and SP in their local settings. Some of the ideas are summarised in the figure 4.4 below:

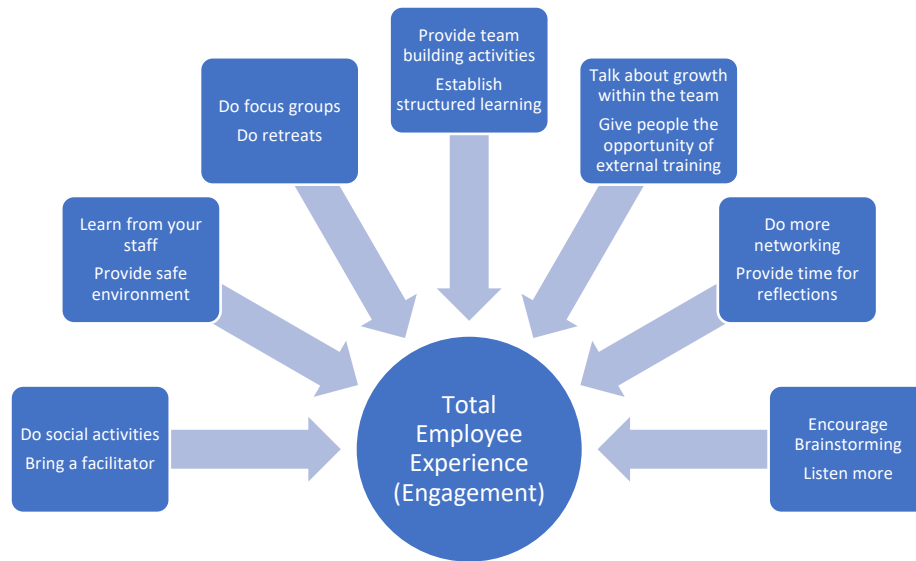


Figure: 4.4: Activities to Promote Engagement and Motivation

Building from the previous topic, and to deepen participants' insights, the following discoveries relate to how senior management could plan *when* and *how* succession planning takes place. Participants indicated that it is important to plan ahead and to know who the potential candidates are. In addition to that, having policies to plan a progressive retirement would be highly beneficial.

Another candidate explained how it is important first to talk about SP and make an effort to spot high performers. The next step is to invest in top performers and empower them by providing an opportunity to grow. Participants maintain that in addition to needing a plan to transfer the information needed for job positions, it is important to realise that this process is a multi-year planning project. Other candidates highlighted that TM and SP discussions need to be done on a regular basis with the HR champion. Another candidate highlighted that managers should know their teams inside out and have a plan to replace staff members occupying key roles.

Other candidates maintain that documentation is needed to record information such as which employee has taken which training course, what tasks are assigned to them, and what skills are needed for their growth. Another participant emphasised that getting to know the team and communicating 100% while listening actively and opening lines of communication is key.

A collective perception around the role senior management should play to support SP gravitates around the notion that the teams, and their people managers “need to be ready” for when SP happens. As per the twelfth participant:

*“If you have a plan, then succession will happen naturally as people leave. You can't assume that just because someone is in their 60s that you need to do succession for them, because someone may be leaving in their 30's, 40's, 50's, to go to another position which means you need succession plans no matter what.” Participant 12*

*“To me, you should have a succession plan ready because we don't know what tomorrow brings and we need to be ready for it. So, you have a plan and then when you execute your plan you hope and pray that it is viable, and it is a realistic plan. There are always unknown variables but often it is quite possible to be prepared, at least conceptually.” Participant 12*

*“Documenting processes is useful, having an institutional history is also important, and finally, thinking and preparing for succession as a truly dynamic [process] is of utmost importance.” Participant 12*

As the researcher deepened his understanding of the participants' insights regarding current SP practices in their departments, the questions regarding their preparedness to fulfil vacancies and anticipate departures proved useful in discovering the meaning that participants gave to these topics.

Specifically, when asked about whether or not they were, or a colleague was the right employee to assume the right role at the right time, they answered in ways that allowed him to understand how participants perceived their preparedness and how they were able to identify future needs.

Eight out of twelve participants indicated that in case of a departure or vacancy, a colleague or themselves could be the right employee to assume the right role at the right time. Then, as the interview progressed, three participants provided unclear answers about their succession preparedness. Furthermore, one candidate indicated that unfortunately, in their department, promotions from within rarely take place. He/she mentioned that it is not part of the mentality in the unit and occasionally they can identify who is a successor.

As the participants were consulted as to whether their unit was able to identify who was a successor and able to describe his/her core competencies, eight participants agree that there is a level of connectivity, an awareness of each other's capacity, to allow the identification of a likely successor who has the right core competencies. Other participants indicated that in their faculties they have natural successors and that there is enough volume and diversity across the unit to move people around and also have a certain ongoing turnover. In addition to mentioning transferability practices, participants agreed that they are able to identify who is a potential successor; however, that decision process was informal.

Moreover, participants 8, 9, and 12 mentioned that there is a clear description of the tasks and the skillset needed to fulfil key roles in their units. In terms of competencies, there is no reported hesitation in knowing what is required to guarantee SP.

#### **4.2.3.2. Precipitants of TM and SP Failures**

In this theme, the interviewees discussed in multiple ways the relationships between workforce input, performance, and succession planning. They elaborated how these three circles are interconnected. One participant stated that these three elements need to balance each other; for example, you would start by getting new talent, continue to make sure people are performing, and give your team members opportunities to keep teams motivated. In the candidate's own words:

*"It is not only about retirement, but rather a constant renewal." Participant 3*

Another candidate echoed this comment by reporting:

*"We need to work with managers on creating teams that are strong and performing so that trust is built. We also need coaching plans. On the other hand, information needs to be spread out across the institution, as not all the units and faculties are following the same approach."*

*Participant 4*

One participant stated that to synchronise workforce input, performance, and succession planning, the right tools and the right performance evaluations are needed. In the participant's own words:

*"A centralised program spearheaded by HR could be trickled down from a central to a local level. It is a mix. You would need the right tools and the right performance evaluation." Participant 9*

Three participants reported that the key to interconnect workforce input, performance, and succession planning is communication in a team environment; during the discussion, the participant also said:

*“Knowing where people stand in their personal choices from one year to another is key, so we need to consider the needs in an ever-evolving model. You need to know that there is not a perfect circle because it is forever changing.” Participant 12*

Furthermore, one more participant mentioned that there is a need for uniformity in the implementation of the performance evaluation and the need for the centralisation of the information, because data is not shared across HR departments (central and local).

Participants identified various ways in which their institution shares TM data across the network of units. Three candidates out of twelve indicated that there is data sharing across the networks, seven candidates said that currently there is no data sharing, and finally, two candidates provided unclear answers.

During the interview, the seven participants who reflected on this topic reported that currently there are no formal ways to share data. They said:

*“Currently there is no software and there are no formal ways. It only happens if, for instance, I meet with my counterparts at other faculties or units so that we get to know each other. The same happens with HR units, but nothing is structured coming from the top HR office.”*  
*Participant 2*

Similarly, other three candidates concurred, stating:

*“I think we need to devote more effort to data sharing. As an institution we offer programs, and we train staff with specialised skills, however, when staff graduates from those programs, they are not pulled together.” Participant 3*

*“Data at our institution is not shared across the board, so we need to develop strategies to be more transparent and share information and data as we have it. We could have ambassadors or champions working across the institution to meet this goal.” Participant 4*

*“Our information is only shared at a very local level; it is a small community. All is very informal.” Participant 11*

Another participant mentioned that there is hope that data sharing could happen more easily with the new system. He/she reported that:

*“There is going to be a module that includes TM but for now, the current system is obsolete and not capable of supporting data sharing across the networks of units.” Participant 9*

Participant 12 gave a specific example by stating:

*“Our unit often tries to share information, but this does not necessarily mean information comes back the other way around. Often people join our unit as a way to get training in different areas and once they have knowledge of it, they move on to other opportunities.” Participant 12*

A few respondents noted that there are several ways to bridge the inputs and outputs. More specifically, participants maintain that to create an effective dialogue that can guarantee organisational effectiveness and sustainability, it is necessary to evaluate both the positive and negative aspects and implications of TM and SP in the organisation. Figure 4.5 provides a summary of the candidates' suggestions towards more sustainable and consistent activities that support TM and SP, thus reducing potential causes of failure.



Figure: 4.5.: Summary of Candidates' Recommendations.



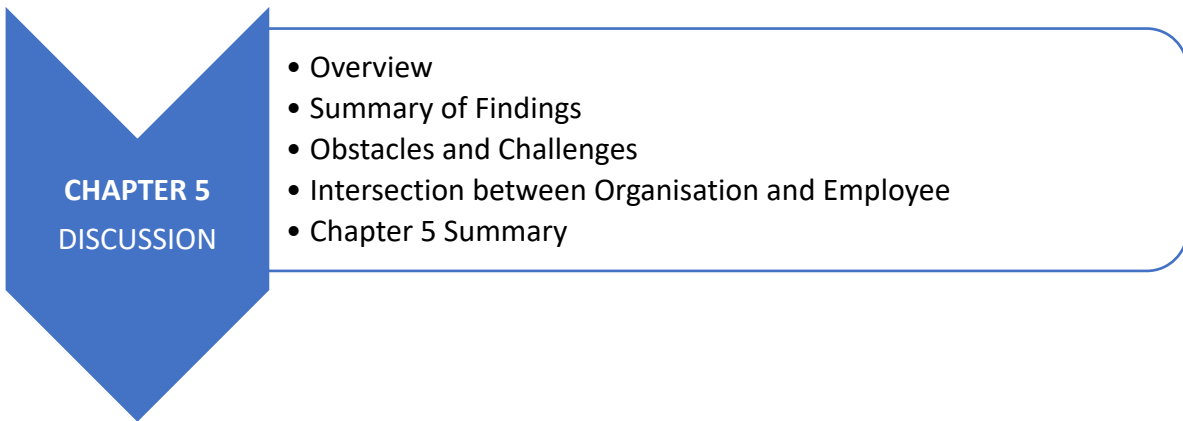
### **4.3. Chapter 4 Summary**

This chapter presented the results from the interview process conducted with the participation of twelve staff members from the Finance department of several faculties and units across the institution. The preeminent highlights were presented and narrowed down into three main themes that emerged from the comprehensive data analysis processes which included manual coding, and two phases of thematic analysis that included the use of NVivo software version 12. Each theme was categorised into various subthemes to better convey the participants' perceptions around current TM and SP practices within the Institution; these provided further insights and enhanced the rigour and clarity of this research.

Participants in this study clearly believe that the introduction of new practices that support TM and SP in the institution are necessary. Feedback from participants also supported the notion that there would be added value if TM and SP programs were designed to support more continuity, ensure greater diversity, and foster a holistic approach that facilitates not only staff retention and development, but also employee and institutional readiness. Figure 4.5. presents the participants' perceptions around the potential causes of success and failure of TM and SP practices.

In a nutshell, Chapter 4 addressed three main themes that range from barriers and obstacles that prevent the implementation of TM and SP to inconsistencies regarding collaboration, engagement, and ownership; furthermore, participants in this study also addressed the implications for future planning and listed valuable insights that support TM and SP within the institution. As a side note, in August 2020, the implementation of a new HR Management System came into effect; TM and SP modules will be integrated in a future phase.

Chapter 5 will include a discussion of the main themes and its categories while incorporating my personal interpretations of the narratives obtained from the data. More specifically, I will provide an outline of my own sense-making exercise in which I will connect the various narratives and interpretations back to the research question while keeping in mind the context and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Lastly, I will list some obstacles, challenges and intersections between organisation and employees that emerged. Figure 4.6. presents an outline of Chapter 5.



*Figure 4.6: Chapter 5 Outline*

## ***CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION***

### ***5.0. Overview***

Chapter 5 examines the dynamic relationships between the literature and the findings. The overall structure of the chapter encompasses two main sections. Each of the sections delves into the emerging topics such as: obstacles that prevent TM and SP strategies from being implemented, and the interdependence and essential collaboration needed between employee and employer.

In addition, this chapter summarises the researcher's contribution, the literature on the above strategies, and their potential and actual implementation in a specialised setting. It also provides a sharper understanding of practice and the intersection and relationship between what the participants report and what the existing research literature about TM and SP has demonstrated. In other words, the literature review from Chapter 2 provided the conceptual framework that allowed the researcher to tie, to understand, and to connect findings in a clear and coherent way.

The first section of the chapter focuses on the reported challenges and emerging obstacles that range from inconsistencies and unclear policies to lack of clarity, ownership, and accountability. The second section highlights the importance of collaboration, community development, and engagement between organisations and individuals; it also emphasises how crucial the connection between employee and employer is, as their interaction brings value to their respective positions and the organisation as a whole. Participants' feedback and the literature review concur that effective mentoring, coaching, training, and development programs need to be executed and/or enhanced when applicable.

In summary, Chapter 5 connects the various narratives and interpretations back to the research question and the previous literature on this topic. Throughout this chapter, the researcher provides a detailed description and discussion of his findings, in which he appraises their implication and ponders their impact, meaning, and importance for practice and subsequent research.

### ***5.1. Summary of Findings – Connecting Literature and Results***

Feedback from participants demonstrates that there are several areas in the findings that intersect with relevant research into TM and SP. Participants shared specific lessons and ideas that promote critical thinking and delineate important themes around TM and SP readiness. As discussed in Chapter 2, the majority of research on these topics supports the use of TM and SP strategies to enhance the performance of an organisation and the individuals that compose it.

Participants have diverse responses concerning the current *obstacles* and *challenges* that prevent TM and SP from being implemented. For example, the discussion around these barriers includes inconsistent practices and policies (particularly, as relates to diversity), lack of ownership and accountability, and bureaucracy; and others; this results in a lack of clarity and reduced efficacy of processes that may support and promote compelling TM and SP practices.

What is at stake here is clear: “People matter” (Lengnick-Hall and Lengnick-Hall, 2012). The *collaboration* that organisations and individuals generate also matters. In other words, the approach an organisation uses to manage its human capital could determine the difference between success or failure when discussing TM and SP and the commitment individuals have with an organisation. Clearly, a diverse community that collaborates, communicates, engages,

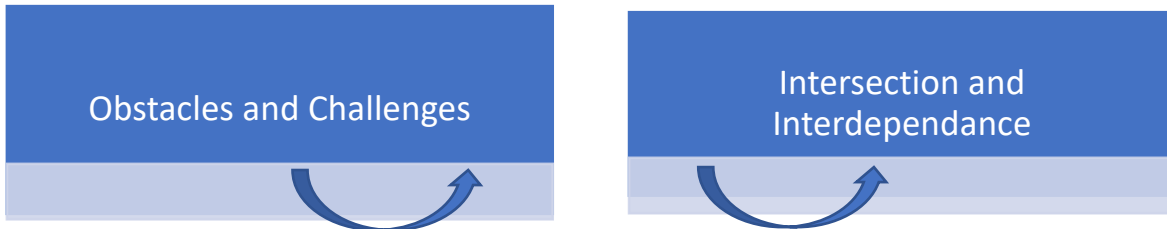
and produces the desired results in full partnership forms a potent blend of expertise and teamwork that leads to an effective governance of talent and organisational success.

Research studies on TM and SP readiness indicate that coaching, mentoring, and professional development are support mechanisms that facilitate professional qualifications because they assist in helping employees grow and develop (Graham, 1994; Janson, 2015). The literature review and participants' responses are in accord: effective coaching programs tailored to optimise effectiveness and performance through people and processes provides several benefits such as productivity enhancement, acceleration of professional development and reduced turnover of key talent, among others (Toterhi and Recardo, 2016). In addition, the research findings and the literature review concur that training and staff development initiatives that encompass various learning practices are eminent development plans that, if aligned with the organisation's goals, will not only achieve sustainable business growth, but also nurture employee potential (Guthridge, Lawson and Komm, 2008). In simple words, the *intersection* and *interdependence* between individuals and organisations is what brings value.

Hence, as noted by Arasanmi and Krishna (2019) and Minchington (2006), institutions that wish to form a strong Employee Value Proposition (EVP) can focus on the relationship between employee and employer to increase organisational commitment, engagement, and continuity. The active relationship thus created increases employee loyalty and reduces their likelihood of leaving for other institutions. An EVP framework has not yet been implemented in the institution where this doctoral study took place. Its application might indeed be a beneficial addition to the TM and SP systems, as it rewards and promotes employees' loyalty and engagement.

The experiences and feedback gathered from participants correlates with the relevant literature mentioned above about TM and SP (Minchington, 2006; Arasanmi and Krishna, 2019); both resources provide a comprehensive assessment of current TM and SP practices and bring

to light pertinent enhancements and recommendations for the next generation of managers. Chapter Six – Section 6.5 provides further insights and recommendations for the future and highlights key realisation factors for sound execution of TM and SP practices.



*Figure 5.1: Summary of Findings – Connecting the Literature and the Results*

## **5.2. Obstacles and Challenges**

The following section draws on various data sets that are organised into eight subordinate themes. Through this framework, the researcher developed the participants' stories in a way that highlights the context of their participation and captures the essence of their experience; as is common with qualitative research, the stories were assessed through repeated iterations between literature and data. The starting point was to seek to understand the various obstacles and challenges to then broadly define them and, lastly, organise them with a sensemaking perspective. While it was not plausible to amalgamate the cycles of interpretation and action-based solutions due to COVID-19, it was, however, possible to create a logical understanding of the phenomena within the cycles of interpretation. In a nutshell, this section delves into the following sub-ordinate themes:

1. The organisation places emphasis on the individual versus the team
2. The organisation can invest and develop talent at all echelons
3. The organisation can have a more robust system to track and document TM and SP
4. The organisation can assess and promote the internal supply of talent

5. The organisation can have more consistent practices and policies to support TM and SP
6. The organisation adopts a bureaucratic and individualistic TM and SP framework
7. The organisation can promote ownership, accountability, and involvement regarding TM and SP initiatives
8. The organisation can have a clearer and more consistent approach to define key roles that support TM and SP protocols, which in turn can align organisational objectives

The managers' practical knowledge is at the forefront of the eight sub-ordinate themes presented above. It reflects the extent to which the TM and SP initiatives reported by the managers, the subject of this study, are underpinned by their empirical experience and understanding. These eight topics capture the basic dimensions of how these managers experience TM and SP in their day-to-day activities in the researched HEI.

### ***5.2.1. Emphasis: Individual versus Team***

According to ten participants, the researched organisation puts emphasis on individual performance and individual evaluation, thereby diminishing the possibility for teamwork development. The current performance evaluation is done on an individual level and not done at the team level, which reduces team learning and creates internal competition between employees, thus creating destructive patterns and affecting cohesion (Brunette, Cabantous and Couture, 2015); but as highlighted by one participant, opportunity exists, as doing a team evaluation could be very interesting to demonstrate how they function as a team.

### ***5.2.2. Investing and Developing All Levels***

Building on Pfeffer's (2001) and Sparrow & Makram's (2015) thoughts described in Chapter 2, adopting a selective management approach that gives preference to a certain group

of individuals can be dangerous to the organisation. As Pfeffer claims, a good deal of evidence suggests that teams can outperform groups of more talented individuals and that people can perform above or below their natural abilities depending on the situation in their immediate environment. Organisations such as the one in this study could consider focusing on developing their internal talent rather than always relying on external hires, thus leveraging value creation, value capture, and value protection as detailed by Sparrow and Makram (2015).

Previous research has shown that there are consequences to the approach discussed above and, for this very reason, it is imperative that organisations get the best out of their own employees before resorting to hiring outside talent. Clearly, investing and developing internal talent is consequential to good organisational performance; for this reason, fighting “the war for talent” can indeed be hazardous to the organisations’ health (Pfeffer, 2001; Claussen *et al.* 2014). The preservation and programming of TM and SP practices requires a TM architecture constructed around risk optimisation, mitigation frameworks, processes, sustainable design, and maintenance of effective governance of talent (Sparrow and Makram, 2015).

### ***5.2.3. No System and Procedures to Document and Track TM and SP – A Real Challenge***

According to Wellins, Smith and Erker (2009), a correlation exists between successful TM and SP practices and organisational effectiveness and success. For example, they argue that organisations with the most effective leadership development programs in place also use the realisation factors most effectively to execute development strategies, outperforming organisations with the least effective development programs by 28-62 % points. On the other hand, the authors maintain that “software does not equal talent management; claiming a piece of software can provide a full-time management system, is a bit like assuming a food processor would produce a five-star meal.”



In other words, having the right tools and system does not guarantee success proper outcome, as tools without the right expertise or the right ingredients will not produce the desired outcomes; in this vein, an effective TM and SP strategy encompasses a “potent blend” of technology, expertise, and teamwork. Software can support the process, but it cannot stand alone (Ariss, 2014).

Well-crafted solutions to support TM and SP require that organisations connect institutional culture, software systems, and sustainable practices implemented with careful and extensive planning to put forward initiatives that are not rushed. According to Wellins, Smith and Erker, (2009), organisations must be careful not to rush into implementing initiatives or programs to give the appearance of taking action; instead, providing a well-crafted solution should be paramount. Some organisations do not just merely manage talent, but also develop talent factories as they combine functionality, processes, and engagement, thus allowing institutions to develop and retain key employees to satisfy evolving business needs (Ready and Conger, 2007; Ariss, 2014).

#### ***5.2.4. Internal Supply of Talent – Another Real Challenge***

Rudis (2006), argues that the availability of top talent is a permanent concern. Organisations need to work on solid strategies to attract and retain top talent; however, it is a greater challenge to “always [get] the diverse mix we are seeking—namely, passport diversity, gender diversity and ethnic background diversity.” Participants concur with Rudi’s statement, reporting that the supply of talent remains a formidable challenge in the institution where this research took place. Talent acquisition and development is a fluid process. Currently, the greatest challenge is getting the right people to occupy the right position at the right time; in addition, and since talent is mobile, organisational agility is required (Harsch and Festing, 2020). Therefore, institutions need to be careful about TM and SP to avoid large numbers of employees

moving on to finding other opportunities. Continuing with Rudis' argument (2006), it is necessary to "fight to get the best people" if an organisation genuinely aims to be successful in closing the gap and ensuring a proper SP strategy. Also, as per Harsch and Festing (2020), organisational agility requires transparency, flexibility, innovation, cooperation, and proactivity so that the institution can build competitive advantage.

### ***5.2.5. Inconsistent Practices and Policies—Particularly around Diversity***

Regarding diversity, organisations function within a rapidly changing and increasingly complex multicultural environment and must adapt to operating in a widely diverse scenario with various cultures and work preferences (Allio, 2011). In other words, the generational and gender diversity, as well as the ethnic and cultural diversity, are often on the rise within a single organisation, department, or unit. The greater the cultural diversity, the higher the need to develop an array of strategies that support the multiple working modes (Janson, 2015).

Related to the notion about openness and diversity, Participant 3 provides a rigorous and rich insight into the benefits of a multicultural environment:

*"A Higher Education Institution should be innovative and should be an organisation that is willing to take stands on important issues such as diversity. An HEI should be an organisation that can push things forward and be open to try new things. We should be more open to take risks and the work environment should be very liberated and have a culture where the institution could promote 'thinking outside the box', such as pushing new ideas and concepts. The principle above, also applies to the approach used for staffing; for example, seeking more diversity and promoting a cultural generational shift as well as promoting more stability, would be beneficial to the organisation."*

Organisations are encouraged to continue the creation of new plans to manage across borders, hire, develop, and retain the best employees (Allio, 2011). Similarly, McGregor and Hamm (2008) maintain that an effort to *reinvent* the way tasks get done ensures that not only the right employees occupy the right places at the right time, but also well-educated and hard-working employees who can get the job done can remain in and commit to the organisation.

### **5.2.6. Bureaucratic Framework versus Individualistic Framework**

It is important for organisations to know how and when to compete for talent and therefore prevent their competitors from taking away key employees occupying top positions. Organisations need to develop sustainable strategies and know how to keep, motivate, train, and maintain their workforce to meet the needs of all employees and fulfil their demand for talent (Cappelli, 2010), therefore improving their talent optimisation (Schiemann, 2014). In a nutshell, TM is just about learning how to anticipate the need for human capital. According to Cappelli (2008), there are several approaches to support TM; the most common strategy is to *do nothing*, meaning to have no plans to address SP.

The second most common approach, particularly common among large organisations, pertains to complex and *bureaucratic frameworks* that come from the 1950s. Workforce planning has always been a challenge; however, it is time to revolutionise and fundamentally change the TM and SP approaches while considering the uncertainties and rapid changes institutions are facing today. Typically, TM and SP strategies encompass a multiyear holistic development strategy. We need to be cognisant that TM is not an end in itself, as it focuses on developing employees and creating proper succession plans that can guarantee not only organisational success, but also human capital development (Cappelli, 2008; Schiemann, 2014).

Following Cappelli's lines regarding bureaucratic frameworks (2008), eight out of the twelve candidates indicated that the current institutional approach to TM and SP is bureaucratic. Participants 1, 3, 5, and 11 indicated that the current framework is individualistic. Surprisingly, none of the candidates indicated that the current TM and SP methods are neither participative, nor collaborative. In the researchers' view, this division among participants regarding the perception of where the organisation stands, presents an opportunity to open up a conversation to bridge the gap and move towards participative and team collaboration frameworks. Certainly, this is a topic to be delved into in future research.

### ***5.2.7. Ownership, Accountability, and Involvement of Senior Managers – Key to Strategic Development***

For TM and SP strategies to work effectively, it is imperative that organisations align their business goals and strategic plans to intertwine the quality and quantity of the talent needed. Knowing *how* and *when* to *manage talent* is an essential element of any function within the institution. Teamwork at **all** levels is expected for TM and SP to work. For example, it is assumed that various departments and units need to collaborate to create successful initiatives. More specifically, HR departments (both local and central), unit heads, and supervisors must work as a team while having active support from senior leadership who will be able to guarantee that budgets and resources are aligned to the overall TM and SP tactical strategy used to support and drive human capital development. As per Wellins, Smith and Erker, (2009), "the ability an organisation has to compete, depends upon the performance of all its key talent and its ability to develop and promote that talent." In addition, ownership and accountability play a significant role in fostering a culture of trust within teams, as this will not only improve employee morale and productivity but will also give the teams autonomy and a sense of

empowerment and belonging needed to thrive; in colloquial terms: “Do not sit at the table, instead, set the table”.

At this juncture, participants expressed some differences when asked about who the ultimate owner of TM and SP protocols should be. As expressed in Sections 4.2.2.3. and 4.2.2.4., it is evident that the participants have different opinions in this regard. McKinsey’s Quarterly research report (Guthridge, Lawson and Komm, 2008) emphasises the crucial role that *deep commitment* and *ownership* play in a well-rounded TM strategy and the impact they have on organisational success. Guthridge, Lawson and Komm, (2008) maintain that instilling a deep commitment to talent within the institution begins at the top and cascades all the way down through the ranks. More specifically, they argue that what is needed is a deep-rooted conviction among business units, heads, and senior leaders that people really matter. Leaders must develop the capabilities of employees, nurture their careers, and manage the performance of both individuals and teams.

In conjunction, human resource leaders should refine their capacity to translate organisational needs into a solid TM and SP framework. More specifically, organisations must prioritise talent and regard it as the most significant investment needed to attract, develop, and retain different kinds of employees. According to Guthridge, Lawson and Komm, (2008), “such a strategy will be successful when talent is nurtured at **all** levels.”

### **5.2.8. Lack of Clarity**

To align organisational objectives and business strategies, and facilitate collaboration across departments, it is crucial to highlight the importance of clarity and the role it plays in determining what the organisation needs and what employees are looking for when reviewing the roles of successors and talented employees. These profiles usually go beyond competencies

and include various components designed to manage talent in accordance with business objectives. Success profiles reflect the priorities and the strategies to be used in key contexts and functions (Wellins, R.S., Smith A.B., Erker, 2009).

In addition, organisations must be able to identify the difference between an employee who has great potential, an employee who is a top performer, and an employee who displays a great degree of readiness. Potential, performance, and readiness are *not* the same, and it is necessary for institutions to understand the difference between high-potential employees and workers who need more developmental attention. Not considering these differences, will pose a great challenge. Generally, TM is all about putting the right people in the right jobs at the right time (Deloitte, 2017).

Participant 12 echoes the argument above by emphasising the importance of clarity as follows:

*“Clarity and communication are important. It is crucial to have regular discussions and mutual understanding about expectations. For example, determine where you and the team are, realise and determine where you all want to be. Then, how does the team bridge the gap. I think the performance evaluation, if done properly, is an absolutely critical tool to keep employees engaged, but also have them know what is expected and lastly, have them know when and where the recognition comes.”*

Huselid, Beatty and Becker (2005) highlight the importance of establishing a clear distinction between “A players” and “A positions”. The authors point out that only investing in “A players” without considering if they are occupying an “A position” might not bring the desired value to the organisation and it is not the most effective workforce management strategy. The authors emphasise that what matters is that the “A players” occupy strategic roles to bring value to the institution while good but not top-tier performers (B players) are placed in support positions.

Lastly, organisations should make tough decisions and eliminate non-performing employees (C players) and jobs that do not add value.

The successful and productive management of different employee levels requires the clever handling of B and C positions as well. Logically, the first step begins by recognising “A players” and “A positions” and be *direct and clear* about the organisation's strategy while acknowledging that institutions simply cannot simply afford to have A players in all positions. Often, institutions lay out equal opportunities and treatment for the best and worst employees, thereby creating discrepancies and inconsistencies leading to the departure of “A players” who feel demoralised by their treatment and the holding of C players.

### **5.3. Intersection Between Organisation and Employee**

Kimberly Janson (2015), maintains that a good institutional culture is one that takes active measures such as training and development, considers personalised leadership, and continuously manages and develops its cultural strength to improve creativity while promoting innovation. In addition, she argues that having the right approach to TM and SP helps organisations exceed expectations, enhance staff productivity, and increase revenue.

The author highlights that an authentic *relationship* between employees and the institution is key; if organisations want to achieve their desired goals, they depend on the *engagement* and performance of their employees who are the ones getting the work done. In Janson’s words: “Employees have careers, organisations don't. It is ideal when career interests and desires intersect with company plans for growth and talent needs related to that growth.” (Janson, 2015, p.31)

Participant 6 follows Janson's thoughts and comments by maintaining that TM and SP are a shared responsibility between various players:

*"TM and SP are key elements of career planning and development from entry staff to executives. Setting a growth environment [within the organisation] and creating opportunities for people to develop their talents is very important. My role as supervisor is to provide opportunities to people under me. To me, this is a shared responsibility between the institution, the manager, and the employee."*

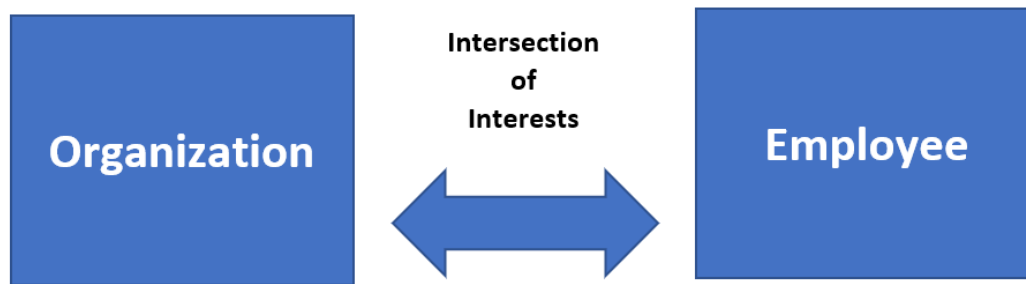
In the context provided by Participant 6, the manager or supervisor acts as the middle translator between organisational levels because managers know the relevant processes, have more insight, and are more familiar with team members and their plans. The position a manager occupies is a powerful one; this middle point allows them to understand more about what is happening in the organisation than those at the top or the bottom. Through the teams they manage, they touch many stakeholders in the company and can feel the pulse of the organisation. They can see the bigger strategic picture on the horizon and can also identify operational issues related to processes and day-to-day activities. More than ever before, this "middleness" places the managers in a position of integration and synthesis where opportunities and challenges emerge.

In today's world, TM problems affect employees, employers, and the workforce as a whole. On the one hand, employees want their skills to be developed and recognised financially, but on the other hand, employers want a fully engaged and affordable workforce. These polarised needs call for a TM strategy that balances the interests of employers and employees, in a way that enhances the level of skills in the workforce while promoting equilibrium and internal advancement. Today, institutions know that in order to succeed in the retention of key employees occupying A positions, it is necessary to have a good understanding of the complex



and competitive markets while actively addressing the need to hire, train, motivate, and develop not only top performers, but also talented people at **all** levels.

Managing talent is indeed as crucial as reducing the gaps that exist at various workforce levels of the institution. For example, according to Rouleau and Balogun, (2008), it is important to invest in middle-managers, as their sensemaking capabilities combined with their strategic role allows them to facilitate change, gather and share information, and assess the needs of every level of the organisation, that is, from the senior positions to the front lines. To complement the notion above, Cappelli, (2008), argues that “talent is increasingly a scarce resource, so it must be managed to the fullest effect.”



*Figure 5.2: Intersection Between Employee and Organisation*

### **5.3.1. The Role Collaboration, Community, and Engagement Play in TM and SP**

One key consideration presented in Lengnick-Hall’s research (2012), is that “People matter”. How does this saying apply to a management perspective? Simply this: the approach an organisation uses to manage its human capital could determine the difference between the success or failure of TM and SP. What is at stake here is human resource management: on one side, nurturing employees, mobilising resources in a more effective way to form better strategic

capabilities, and collaborating to form communities, will certainly drive institutional success; on the other, building relationships and networks of engaged staff members who are using their talent and developing their potential collaboratively, and creating a bridge that connects the various capabilities, perspectives and purposes will guarantee a proper realisation of human talent.

According to the participants, various activities are performed and tailored to support TM and SP strategies; for example, seven participants report that resources are mobilised to boost collaboration, promote communication, and increase community engagement. While five others report that they do not currently have a TM and SP framework in action; all participants acknowledge the importance of TM and SP, and of planning for it so that it can happen naturally. Similarly, Participant 12 argues that having TM and SP plans ready is necessary, documenting processes is useful, and having an institutional history around TM and SP is also important. Finally, seeing TM and SP as an integrated solution, and thinking and *preparing* for SP dynamically will allow managers to anticipate the need for it. Complementing this notion already presented in Chapter 4 (see p. 120), participant 12 also notes:

*“We don't know what tomorrow brings and we need to be ready for it, if it does happen, so you have a plan and then when you execute your plan you hope and pray that is viable and realistic.*

### **5.3.2. The Role Employee Training, Coaching, and Mentoring Play in TM and SP**

#### **5.3.2.1. Training**

An idea shared by the participants concerns the importance of training and sustainable plans for organisational development. This includes implementation of regular employee

feedback, active promotion of employee engagement, development of incentive programs to boost motivation, and others; none of these plans should be complicated. Based on the interview feedback, participants report that more training tailored to increase employee exposure and development is needed, particularly training designed to prepare employees to occupy senior roles. Upon review of the interview results, participants expressed consensus around the notion of training, as a crucial element that promotes employee development and the need for more organisational commitment and deployment of resources to support this initiative.

This emerging idea around training aligns with current literature, as research demonstrates that institutional training programs tailored to support and complement TM and SP strategies enhance organisational effectiveness. Rients (2017), discusses in detail the crucial role compliance training plays in documenting policies and following procedures while meeting legal obligations. Moreover, implementing successful training initiatives allows employees to bring their passion forward, ask questions, interact, and feel empowered; at the same time, managers are able to reward staff participation, inform and inspire their employees. Rients (2017) maintains: "Emotions matter and it is important to understand what we are requiring a staff member to learn. More specifically, learning must be meaningful, memorable, and motivational."

Within an ever-changing workforce culture, higher demand, and increased competition, TM and SP processes must constantly adapt to surmount ongoing challenges. Given the importance of training, it is imperative to build a deeper understanding of the strategic importance of staff development to improve the overall ability of the workforce, develop organisational cohesiveness, and increase employee commitment.

### **5.3.2.2. Coaching**

According to Toterhi and Recardo (2016), an effective coaching program provides several benefits. These include productivity enhancement, acceleration of professional development, and reduced turnover of key talent, among others. Using these tools, organisational leaders can significantly augment the chances that their efforts will produce tangible benefits. The authors argue that the more consistent and well-structured the coaching program is, the greater the likelihood of its success. Coaching is a beneficial tool, but it has to be implemented properly and with purpose. Senior management must ensure that the selected coaching strategy is supported by data and result-oriented to guarantee optimal effectiveness.

The topics surrounding employee coaching presented in the literature above also intersects with the participants' comments, as coaching is another emerging theme that was raised during the data analysis; in this regard, the participants formulated the following observations:

*"I think more coaching or dedicated training for each staff member is needed so that we can work on our weaknesses. I often notice that our institution offers a myriad of trainings, but once you complete them, it is very hard to put training into practice. More support to that extent will be appreciated." Participant 8*

*"It is very rare that someone says to you: you are good, and you should apply to this job. Coaching is not institutionalised, nor systemic." Participant 11*

Managing talent effectively, requires that senior administration recognise that TM policies should not be solely focused on exclusive strategies and, instead acknowledge that different motivations exist for people of different genders, ages, and nationalities who want to work for the organisation, grow within the organisation, and, most importantly, remain at the

organisation. In other words, talent strategies can have a greater impact if “talent is targeted at all levels” as maintained by Guthridge, Lawson and Komm, (2008).

### **5.3.2.3. Mentoring**

Based on Graham’s work (1994), mentoring is a support mechanism that facilitates professional qualifications because it assists in helping employees grow and develop; it also encourages senior management to have a framework and point out organisational success. In short, mentorship programs are key elements of a successful TM and SP strategy. In Graham’s words, “Mentors act as an anchor during the induction into an organisation and the early period of training. Mentoring can provide a valuable means of support in the process of professional development” (Sparrow and Makram, 2015).

Similarly, Charan, Drotter and Noel (2011), maintain that, often, the most effective strategy is to promote from within and that mentorship strategies are meant to avoid leadership stagnation. Pilot programs conducted in previous research have demonstrated not only how mentoring improves staff motivation, but also how well-motivated and well-attuned staff become a valuable asset to an organisation. In addition, a mentorship program may enhance and construct a framework which enhances staff development. To this extent, three participants views coincide with those found in the literature review, as most of the candidates highlight the importance of mentoring as a means to achieve intra-organisational growth.

*“Nowadays, people do not stay too long in a position. People move around to get exposed to new things. If you find someone good, you want them to stay, you need to listen to what they say and find the balance for them. You also need to mentor them so that they feel accomplished, committed, and motivated. Yet, you want to make them known to others, as people will shine and continue to move up.” Participant 1*

*“In our institution the focus is on workshops and not really on mentoring.” Participant 6*

*“Mentoring should be used at different stages, such as hiring or promotion, and it should also be used as a way to maintain sustainability.” Participant 2*

It is evident in the conversation among participants and in the literature review that mentoring is another mechanism with which employees are provided the necessary tools to grow within an organisation. Previous research demonstrates that there is no single framework that suits every individual within an institution: as Graham claims, “No one model fit us all” (1994). On the other hand, it is useful to consider the benefits of planned mentoring and how it plays out in different contexts.

Planned mentoring allows organisations to increase employee readiness (Wellins, R.S., Smith A.B., Erker, 2009) and promote effective developmental relationships (Day, 2001), which in turn, facilitate the understanding of expected outcomes, and allow senior administration to inquire as to whether those expected outcomes will provide lasting benefits (Graham, 1994); furthermore, and as maintained by participants, it is necessary to work around the implementation of structured actions and activities such as planned mentoring to better align individual objectives with the organisational vision and mission.

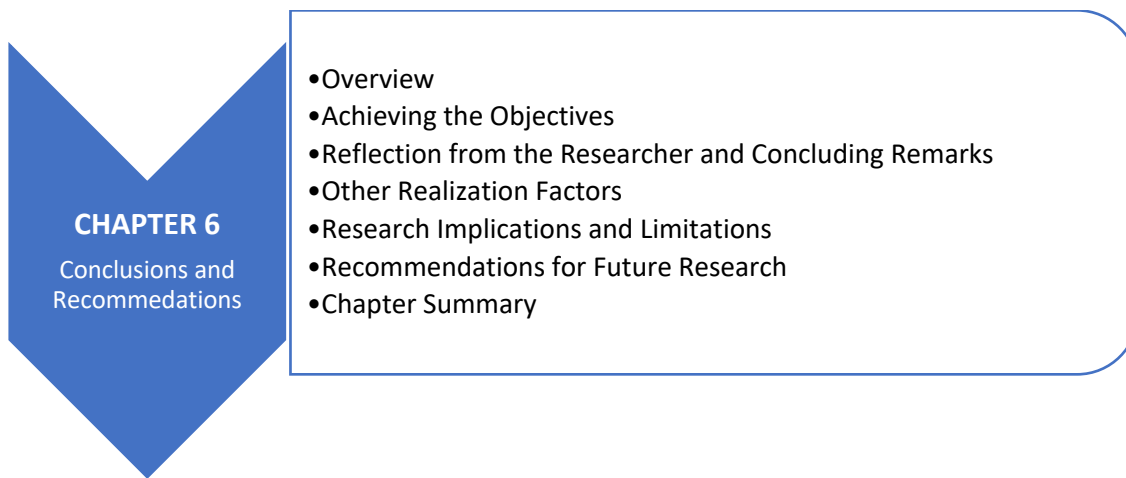
## **5.4. Chapter 5 Summary**

Chapter 5 discussed the dynamic connection between theory and data, focusing on the points of convergence and divergence between the literature on TM and SP and the participants' responses; furthermore, the convergent elements in particular were used to highlight key themes and provide preliminary recommendations. The overall structure of the chapter encompassed two main sections 5.2. and 5.3., that are summarised as follows:

- Obstacles and challenges that prevent TM and SP strategies from being implemented
- The interdependence and essential collaboration needed between organisation and employee

In this chapter, the researcher engaged in a sense-making exercise to connect the various narratives and interpretations back to the research question and research objectives while keeping in mind the context and literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Throughout Chapter 5, the researcher contributed to the research discussion and provided a detailed description of the data. Moreover, during the sense-making exercise, the researcher appraised the implications of the study's discoveries and its contribution to practical knowledge in this field, and reflected on its impact, its meaning, and its importance for practice and future research.

In Chapter 6, the researcher connects the various narratives and interpretations drawn from the research findings and literature review to provide a general sketch of the study's contributions its recommendations for improvement, and the future development of new strategies tailored to support TM and SP plans across the organisation. In the last section of this chapter (see Section 6.5.), the researcher concludes with a reflection and a recommendation for future research, thus advancing the application of actionable and sustainable knowledge obtained by this study.



*Figure 5.3: Chapter 6 Outline*



## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.0. Overview**

Chapter 6 presents the conclusions and recommendations for future research that resulted from this qualitative study. Section 6.1. highlights the achievement of the research objectives as follows. First, the researcher's contribution to practical knowledge within the context of the research objectives presented in Chapter 1 – Section 1.5. is elaborated in Chapter 6 – Section 6.1.1. Second, in Section 6.1.2., the researcher reflects on the importance of learning in the workplace and the role engaged communities play in the development of a group and its coexistence in a social learning system. Third, the researcher recognises in Section 6.1.3. that commitment to the people is a key element of a company's TM and SP framework, as people are its most important and valuable asset.

Then, in Section 6.2., the researcher embarks in a reflective journey and provides a personal insight about his DBA experiences and how he changed as a researcher, as a practitioner, and as a person. Next, he presents concluding remarks and other realisation factors that form an argument concerning the attributes and conditions that facilitate equilibrium and meaningful connections between employees and employer. In Section 6.4., the researcher delves into the research implications and limitations (such as the impact of COVID- 19 on this study) and Section 6.5. concludes the study by providing recommendations for future research.

### **6.1. Achieving the Objectives**

This systematic inquiry aimed to examine the circumstances that add value to, influence, challenge, and/or nurture TM for successful SP in an HEI. This qualitative work also had as focus, the investigation of the precipitants and causal factors that complement and enhance TM and

SP. In addition, it aimed to examine and describe what happens *in practice* regarding TM and SP practices at the research institution that was the subject of the study.

To do so, the researcher explored the factors that affect TM and SP in the context of the research question and sub-questions; as a result, this qualitative IPA study delved into the causes, barriers, and talent frameworks required to actively identify and develop in-house people managers. The researcher believes this work will make a difference to the HEI where this study took place: first, because this is the first research study focused on TM and SP in a management group in said institution, and second, because it will bring awareness about current TM and SP practices. Although, according to corporate parameters, HEIs are not as *agile* as corporations, HEIs may benefit from the approaches that these organisations have implemented in their workforce. The context in which the research objectives were attained and the value they create will be further discussed in the next section.

### **6.1.1. Contributions to Practice**

The three research objectives presented in Chapter 1 – Section 1.2.3. were achieved in the following way:

First, while keeping the research objectives in mind through the examination of the circumstances that add value to, influence, challenge, and/or nurture TM for successful SP in an HEI, this qualitative study is able to show that the findings described throughout Chapter 5, as well as, the managers' experience and empirical knowledge of their day-to-day activities, are *equally applicable* to the way other managers at different levels and at different units experience TM and SP challenges internally. Although this research study was tailored to a specific group of finance people managers, the findings have further organisational implications and a potentially larger impact, mainly because all units in the HEI follow the same guiding

principles and share the same performance evaluation approach (see Chapter 5 – Section 5.2.1.). Also, all units use the same HR management system and follow the same procedures to track and document TM and SP (see Chapter 5 – Section 5.2.3). Although, the results of this qualitative inquiry do not lead to an immediate and fundamental paradigm shift in the field, this study advances new perspectives in a rigorous and precise way, as the applicability of the findings could be transferred to other unit contexts within the organisation, and potentially to other HEIs.

Second, the investigation of precipitants and causal factors that complement and enhance TM and SP allows the researcher to study, build, and present a deeper understanding of how finance people managers' practical knowledge underpins their ability to make influential decisions and implement interlinked activities that engages staff to support and promote TM and SP; therefore, as the conversation unfolds and topics such as *investing in talent, enhancing internal supply of talent, ownership, community, engagement, and collaboration*, etc. are examined, this exploration advances new contributions to practice by investigating a circumscribed area to then create novel interpretations. While the results of this study do not revolutionise the existing discourse, the researcher brings to light a new elucidation of the theoretical and practical implications of TM and SP practices by creating a rigorous synthesis in Chapters Four and Five, never compiled and never researched before at this HEI.

Third, the multifaceted examination and detailed description of what happens *in practice* at the research institution regarding TM and SP initiatives adopted by middle managers, contributes to the practical knowledge on the subject in an HEI context by showing in detail how employees and their careers are inextricably linked to employers and their strategic objectives, and how the impact TM and SP have on the professional practice can be contextually understood. In other words, the applicability of the findings with respect to the professional context provides an argument for *why* and *how* the findings are relevant to *improve* business practice.

This study, therefore, argues up front that *engagement* between employer and employee enacts *commitment* and ratifies TM and SP, as both engagement and commitment are embedded and situated in practice. Furthermore, this study reveals that practical knowledge derives from the finance people manager's understanding and experience; by explicitly investigating how finance people managers perceive TM and SP in their day-to-day operations, the study presented here suggests a need for a more holistic treatment of TM and SP processes, since they are all interconnected and enacted through the practitioners' practical knowledge.

### **6.1.2. Building Meaning and a Sense of Belonging**

Institutional achievement and advancement directly correlate with the ability an organisation has to define themselves as a social learning entity (Wenger, 2000). Becoming a social learning body and embracing collaborative learning is, in essence, the fluid and regular process of acquiring knowledge, learning from other people, and sharing information; learning happens when we observe other people, ask questions, share resources, and acquire knowledge and understanding via meaningful interactions.

In the workplace context, the application of learning is particularly important as it fosters collaboration, engagement, and commitment, and also facilitates the conversation between learners across the organisation; in turn, this enables employees from every echelon to take ownership of and *responsibility* for their own personal learning experiences (Schiemann, 2014).

When reflecting on the importance of learning in the workplace, I recognise the role *engaged communities* play in the development of a group identity and the commitment to participation evident in these social learning systems. With respect to engagement as a mode of belonging, and following Wegner's (2000) thoughts, it is logical to assume that *how we engage* with each other, will shape our experience and will refine the understanding of our identity, both as a team and as individuals. Taking part and engaging involves collaborating, performing actions

together such as talking, helping colleagues solve a problem, creating products in a team, and attending meetings.

In addition to engagement, *imagination* helps us construct an image of ourselves, of our surroundings, and of the world. Imagination also helps us orient ourselves, reflect on our situation, and explore different possibilities such as telling a story, building a set of possible scenarios to understand our options, innovating, developing new ideas or processes, and increasing productivity (Schiemann, 2014).

*Alignment* pertains to another form of participation; it means making sure that a department's or an organisation's in-house solutions and processes are adequately aligned with other external processes so that its internal achievements can be successfully integrated beyond its own realm. Alignment is not unidirectional; instead, it is a two-way avenue that requires the interdependence and coexistence between two protagonists; for instance, if an employee aligns with an organisation, then it is expected that the organisation also aligns with the individual. More specifically, alignment does not mean *to follow and take the back seat*; instead, it involves recognising that, to some degree, the employee and employer are *both drivers and leaders* (Focus, 2004).

Engagement, imagination, and alignment usually coexist in every social learning system and continuously evolve in various degrees, as each aspect is complimentary and contributes to the formation of opportunities. In consequence, institutions must learn to govern themselves as social learning systems and advance institutional structures and processes that support learning (Schiemann, 2014).

As presented in the literature review, Chapter 2, the researcher aimed to assess how participants' responses reflected to different aspects of Schiemann's (2014), ACE framework, and what areas of talent could be accelerated or deemphasised within the institution. This

assessment helped the researcher determine that current local processes and resources (at the unit level) could be better aligned with other larger processes (at the central level). The organisation needs to embrace a more agile and dynamic approach to performance management.

### ***6.1.3. Commitment to People***

Commitment is a distinctive feature of a company's talent management framework. Promoting commitment and cultivating accountability is essential to an institution that is focused on success and excellence (Ready and Conger, 2007).

Senior leaders should also be held accountable for maintaining honesty in the TM process and ensuring commitment to TM and SP programs; however, as Ready and Conger argue (2007), this is “easier said than done.” Leaders have long said that “people are companies’ most important and valuable assets,” but carrying out actions that reflect these thoughts remains a challenge. Organisations devote resources, time, and energy towards income-generating activities, data access, technology, equipment, and processes, but in the end, “It is the people who matter the most.”

As argued by Cappelli (2008), commitment is a driver fuelling the emphasis on talent development. There is a demonstrated relationship between better talent and better business performance when there is commitment. This forces organisations to place a greater emphasis on TM strategies and practices that respond to the myriad challenges of today’s institutions. By ensuring commitment to TM and SP strategies, employees are more prepared to take ownership of their careers and professional development; as a result, they can acquire a clearer understanding of the organisation's current and future business strategies.

Pertinent questions to ask in future research would be:

*How committed and engaged is the organisation?*

*How committed and engaged is the individual?*

*What drives that commitment and engagement on both ends?*

*Does the shared commitment and engagement increase the alignment of employer and employee interests?*

## **6.2. Reflection from the Researcher and Concluding Remarks**

As I started to work on this dissertation, a question that often came to mind was the one presented by Looi, Maruszak and Baumruk (2004). In their research, they present an argument about the attributes that make a *best employer*. As I delved into the literature review and went through various data collection stages, I gained a greater depth and breadth of knowledge concerning the concepts, activities, and processes that large corporations and public institutions are implementing to target TM and SP.

*What makes a best employer?* This question fostered a sense of curiosity that led me to valuable insights and findings that demonstrate the intrinsic and indivisible connection between employers and employees. The more I learned about what makes a best employer, the more motivation I had to continue my learning journey as a researcher.

Through a careful examination of the literature, I explored different models, theories, concepts, and strategies with an open mind. Even more fascinating was the journey towards understanding the thought processes and experiences of diverse authors and influential thinkers in management whose specialties include human resource management, public policy related to employment, and talent and performance management.

These findings led me to recognise the fine *equilibrium* and *connection* that must exist between employee and employer, as there is direct dependency between these two entities. After all, the employer and employee need each other, as an organisation could not operate without employees, and employees would not have an opportunity to develop professionally if they did not make up part of an organisation.

Even though the question: “What makes a best employer?” was not part of my research inquiry, it stayed in my mind all along the process. It became more relevant and prominent as I reached the end of my research, particularly, when I was connecting the various narratives. Based on my findings, I concluded that a notable employer is one that is anchored to the community, inspires the commitment and dedication of workers, and grants them rich opportunities to put their talents into action. In turn, employees are inspired by *what* they do and *who* they work for or *with*; employees want to evolve, be nurtured, and utilise their skills and expertise in ways that allow them to consistently embody excellence.

Some characteristics of best employers include an authentic leadership framework driven by innovation, a unique organisational culture supported by diversity and inclusion, and a commitment to talent development with a sense of ownership and accountability that is fully aligned with HR practices. Leading with innovation and authenticity requires that employers set an example of a two-way communication, engagement, commitment, and agility. Following the lines of (Jurisic *et al.*, 2020), employers that lead with agility respond faster in crisis environments; the pandemic certainly accentuated the need to adapt faster to change in order to remain afloat. At an enterprise level, agility means the re-thinking of strategy, structure, processes, people, and technology towards a new operating model by rebuilding an organisation around hundreds of self-steering, high-performing teams supported by a stable backbone. Hence, the capacity an organisation has to adjust to change with agility is another key characteristic of best employers.



In addition, best employers are expected to maintain a high degree of visibility and continuous interaction with employees; research has shown that “the leaders of the best talk to employees and average of three times more often than the leaders of the rest” (Looi, Marusz and Baumruk, 2004). In turn, higher accessibility and more communication translates into trust being built while clarity and focus are encouraged.

Leading with innovation and authenticity also requires that leaders encourage receptivity to new ideas, stimulate participation, and define as a set of shared values, goals, attitudes, and practices in which employees are encouraged to give suggestions and feedback using a consultative approach to problem solving. Effective organisations are communicative about their unique institutional culture. They provide a unique employment experience and embrace a culture of excellence in which the company’s values, systems, and practices are designed to ignite the passion and reinforce the commitment and participation of all employees, and, in consequence, celebrate successes and recognise employee achievements.

Talent management must be seen as a critical investment; therefore, it follows that employers must commit to providing different types of training, grant easy access to developmental programs (such as job rotation programs), and schedule one-on-one mentoring for developmental purposes. In this way, employees will have an opportunity to grow professionally and individually via accelerated learning opportunities, where ultimately, the skills learned are put into action. Another key characteristic of best employers pertains to a strong sense of ownership and accountability. Leaders are more effective at developing a culture of responsibility in their organisation when they demonstrate *respect* for their employees; learning *how* and *when* to hold employees accountable for results (whether positive or negative) while celebrating achievements with enthusiasm will instil a stronger sense of employee commitment and responsibility, which in turn translates to proper execution and alignment of TM and SP strategies that produce optimal business results.

A rigorous performance management program should be capable of evaluating managers and peers through a comprehensive 360-degree performance evaluation or any other tool that can assess individuals and teams as a whole. In addition, the performance management program should have a built-in feedback system, so that day-to-day operations and performance are documented; in this way, managers will be able to give immediate feedback to employees in recognition of their work or to help improve performance.

The role of HR leaders is crucial. Another key characteristic of best employers is that HR partners are expected to work in *unison* and as a team to implement, execute, document, and assess TM and SP programs. Through careful planning, dedicated resources, and an effective communication strategy, best employers, supported by their HR leaders, should ensure that TM and SP programs are carried through to a successful implementation, development, and completion.

### **6.3. Other Realisation Factors**

There is no doubt that this research journey has changed me not only as a person and a manager, but also as a doctoral student, researcher, and employee. Approaching this research journey with humility and a fresh and unbiased perspective guided by the interactive inquiry process, allowed me to evolve and experience moments of realisation that brought me clarity and inspiration.

As I experienced these realisations, I pondered the importance of positioning myself as *a learner first*. By adopting the humble and enthusiastic attitude of a learner, I was able to recognise the power of a practitioner and the fact that a practitioner cannot be replaced by technology. I learned that *what we do matters*, and I considered it my responsibility to maintain rigour, clarity, and cohesiveness while drafting this dissertation. I listened to the participants and paid

attention to their non-verbal expressions, reviewed the literature, and diligently composed a holistic and objective dissertation. Furthermore, I adopted a positive learning perspective, which was crucial in maintaining motivation throughout the different stages in the process. More importantly, I *learned* that success was attained when I saw situations from multiple angles, particularly when I positioned myself not only as researcher, employee, and employer, but also as a manager and coach—all of this with the aim of understanding the implications of each position.

Another realisation factor following the COVID-19 pandemic, a time when the domains of work and life have been increasingly overlapping, is that institutions are expected to facilitate a work-life balance and create environments conducive to long-term productivity and trust. Likewise, organisations are expected to continuously adapt their respective TM and SP strategies to flexible work practices such as telecommuting and to the faster adoption of automation, artificial intelligence and digitisation, all propelled by the pandemic (Lund, Madgavkar and Smit, 2021). In addition, the pandemic has brought to light the importance of physical proximity and the way its presence or absence shapes the future of work.

The scale of workforce transition set off by COVID-19's influence on labour trends increases the urgency for businesses and policymakers to take steps to support additional training and education programs for workers (Ramlachan and Beharry-Ramraj, 2021). Companies and governments exhibited extraordinary flexibility and adaptability in responding to the pandemic with purpose and innovation, qualities which they can also harness to retool the workforce in ways that point to a brighter future of work. Policymakers could support businesses by expanding and enhancing their digital infrastructure; both businesses and policymakers could collaborate to support workers migrating between occupations. The reward of such efforts would be a more resilient, more talented, and better paid workforce, and a more robust and equitable society.

The most obvious impact of COVID-19 on the labour force is the dramatic increase in the number of employees working remotely; virtual meetings became the new normal, and employees and employers learnt about how to immediately adapt to the new environment. The pandemic pushed companies and consumers to rapidly adopt new behaviours, many of which are likely to remain prominent, therefore changing the trajectory of workplace trends (Lund, Madgavkar and Smit, 2021). In light of the current challenges posed by the pandemic, a best employer is one that adapts, demonstrating resiliency and change agility in the face of change, and continues to support, develop, and invest in employees despite the challenges (Ramlachan and Beharry-Ramraj, 2021). The obstacles presented in Chapter 4.3 highlight the factors that may be stopping this HEI from changing and developing organisational agility.

#### ***6.4. Research Implications and Limitations***

As an inside researcher and employee, I always remained cognisant that examining my own managerial practices in a professional context could air potential barriers and implications at different levels (i.e., political, cultural, hierarchical, etc.), as the matter of analysing one's own workplace can be a sensitive one (Creswell, 2013); this dual role limitations include the relationship risks that cascade from the researcher's professional link with the participants. In addition, one should not underestimate any barrier or obstacle, but rather remain open and neutral to objectively evaluate inside and outside following the thoughts of Moore (2007). Due to COVID-19 and government restrictions, the data collection stage suffered a significant delay because I had to resubmit ethical approvals to both institutions to continue the data collection stage via virtual meeting software.

From an organisational perspective, the institution was not prepared for an event of this magnitude. At the time when the COVID-19 pandemic started, the institution was not only approaching the end of their fiscal year, but also pursuing the initial integration phase of a new

HR management system; as a result, staff availability was limited, resulting in many rescheduled interviews. In this vein, the staff had also to rapidly adapt to a work-from-home environment that was never experienced before.

The second phase of data collection (the focus group) was also affected and could not be completed as originally planned due to the pandemic restrictions; but after consulting with my thesis supervisor, I decided, that based on the amount of data that was collected in phase one, the efforts could be focused on its analysis and exhaustive interpretation, to make sense of the various themes that surfaced in the data. Hence, the secondary circles of action research were rooted in a deep analysis of the findings.

From an implications lens and as mentioned in Chapter 1, public institutions context is different than the corporate world or SME's, mainly because of the contextual factors and the equality fundamentals that are characteristics for public sectors; in addition, let's not forget that the vast majority of TM literature is performed in other contexts outside public sector institutions; thus, the need to expand and further investigate at a micro and macro levels on this type of contexts. While best practices are not likely to exist what large scale in the public sector, it is important to avoid imitating simplistic talent management practices from other sectors without doing an exhaustive analysis of the organization's external and internal context, as highlighted by Boselie & Thunnissen (2017). Another element is that while reflecting on the dissertation as a whole, I felt that a research of this magnitude also requires that the researcher devotes enough time to properly reflect and engage towards future potential studies; unfortunately due to time constraints, this did not occur, mainly because of the stretched timeframe; hence, reducing the opportunity to further analyse long-term outcomes of the knowledge that was generated.

## **6.5. Recommendations for Future Research**

Future studies should investigate the relationship between employer and employee in more complex ways; in particular, how this relationship has been affected or enhanced during and post-COVID-19, and to what extent new practices have helped organisations increase management capability. In this vein, a multi-level research that possibly combines pre- and post-intervention measures could narrow this particular research gap. Future directions in research may also involve assessing the effectiveness of flexible work initiatives and its impact on TM and SP readiness across HEI, corporations, and SME's. Further areas of research could also be pursued to examine the new evolving models of TM and SP post-COVID-19, as well as, the retention rates and overall impact of these models by comparing organisations who did and did not adapt to the pandemic, including the offering of flexible solutions to staff; differences could be examined across a range of contexts to unveil the organisations rationale to specific TM decisions.

The research areas mentioned above could be pursued to add a lasting contribution to the field of Human Resources Management. The core elements of TM and SP architecture need to be fully identified and documented. To support this initiative, human resource leaders are in an ideal position to take ownership of all the elements needed to clarify the role of all key players such as directors, unit heads, managers, and employees; consequently, these HR leaders will help their organisations build management capability.

As discussed in this dissertation, many elements are needed to develop capabilities and advance business priorities while promoting TM and SP readiness, but the first is to obtain the support of senior leaders to ensure buy-in and demonstrable *support* for the TM and SP processes. Building management capability goes beyond training, as it requires serious commitment both in time and effort. It includes transforming the organisation's culture while

focusing on the role of the manager. By focusing on every aspect of sound TM and SP models, an organisation will be able to develop new norms and expectations for employee attitudes and behaviour; in addition, by grounding TM and SP in a strategic decision framework that clearly guides talent decisions and the impact of talent choices, institutions assisted by human resources leaders and researchers can markedly enhance the quality of talent conversations within organisations of any size.

Since many participants indicated that the current institutional approach to TM and SP is *bureaucratic* and that the current framework is individualistic and non-participative, nor based on team collaboration, the researcher therefore believes the respondents' perception of where the organisation stands presents an opportunity to open up a conversation to bridge this gap and move towards participative and team collaborative TM and SP frameworks. Certainly, this is a topic to be delved into in future research.

Lastly, and building upon findings, I recommend further studies are conducted to re-assess and expand upon Schiemann's framework (2014), as addressed in this qualitative study. While this research did not aim to assess *how* Schiemann's ACE framework is used in the institution where this study took place, I highly recommend its applicability and highlight that it is necessary for organisations to promote the "alignment" of employees with its principles, priorities, and purpose. In addition, I recommend the integration of dynamic capabilities enhanced by the unique set of benefits the employee value propositions (EVPs) can bring to HEIs to execute their business strategies, which means, procuring organisational stability, ensuring continuity, building and reconfiguring internal and external competences to address the continuous change in environment (Teece, 2018), (Harsch and Festing, 2020).

Another important element worth exploring with a focus group in future research is the concept of *agility*, with the goal of determining how agile the organisation was prior, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This inquiry may be instrumental in determining the conjunction

between agility and the implementation of TM and SP, and how agility may drive and enhance current TM and SP practices.

In addition to agility, the best employers also recognize that engagement and commitment offer practical benefits, especially if they happen at both an emotional and intellectual level. These shared attitudes can be encouraged so that employer and employees are fully *aligned*, united in purpose, and working in collaborative alliance. By strengthening this intertwined relationship, all elements of the organisation will flourish. Moreover, HEIs have a unique contribution to make to the field of Talent Management, as they stand at the intersection between the pursuit of knowledge and its application in diverse contexts and fields.



## **6.6. Chapter 6 Summary**

In this final chapter, I discussed the conclusions of my doctoral dissertation and how the objectives set out in Chapter 1 – Section 1.5 were achieved. By delving into the contributions to practice, the building of meaning and belonging, and the importance of commitment from both the employer and employee, I am able to bring forward action-oriented solutions that are aligned with current TM and SP practices. I also provided a personal reflection which included various realization factors approached not only through the lens of a doctoral student, but also from the perspective of a manager and current employee. The research implications and limitations were discussed in detail in Chapter 6 – Section 6.4, including the impact of COVID-19 on the design and action elements of this study.

I intend to further the recognition and implementation of talent management for the benefit of employees and employers in the current institution, the wider higher education sector, and any organisation in the workplace spectrum that could benefit from applying the insights from this doctoral thesis. Forward-focused leaders in HEIs and other organisations increasingly recognize that collaboration is the key to promoting TM development and sustainable SP processes that can drive internal cohesion and growth at all management levels.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1: Ethics Approval Letter from Institution**

**Research Ethics Board I  
Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans**

**REB File #:**

**Project Title:** The Role of Talent Development on Internal Succession Planning for Higher Education People Managers: A Canadian Case Study

**Principal Investigator:** Francisco Oliva Romero

**Co-Investigator:** Helena Santos Rodrigues

The REB-I reviewed and approved this project by delegated review in accordance with the requirements of the  on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participants and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct For Research Involving Humans.

- 
- \* Approval is granted only for the research and purposes described.
  - \* Modifications to the approved research must be reviewed and approved by the REB before they can be implemented.
  - \* A Request for Renewal form must be submitted before the above expiry date. Research cannot be conducted without a current ethics approval. Submit 2-3 weeks ahead of the expiry date.
  - \* When a project has been completed or terminated, a Study Closure form must be submitted.
  - \* Unanticipated issues that may increase the risk level to participants or that may have other ethical implications must be promptly reported to the REB. Serious adverse events experienced by a participant in conjunction with the research must be reported to the REB without delay.
  - \* The REB must be promptly notified of any new information that may affect the welfare or consent of participants.
  - \* The REB must be notified of any suspension or cancellation imposed by a funding agency or regulatory body that is related to this study.
  - \* The REB must be notified of any findings that may have ethical implications or may affect the decision of the REB.

## ***Appendix 2: Ethics Approval Letter from University of Liverpool***

Dear Francisco,

I am pleased to inform you that the DBA Research Ethics Committee has approved the revisions to the ethical approval for your study. These revisions were due to the impact of Covid-19 and informed by the guidelines for social distancing from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and University of Liverpool (UoL). Details and conditions of the approval can be found below:

Committee Name: DBA Research Ethics Committee

Title of Study:

**The Role of Talent Development on Internal Succession Planning for Higher Education People Managers: An Interpretative Phenomenological Study.**

Student Investigator: Francisco A Oliva Romero

School/Institute: School of Management

Approval Date: 07.04. 2020.

The application was APPROVED subject to the following conditions:

1. The researchers must obtain ethical approval from a local research ethics committee if this is an international study
2. University of Liverpool approval is subject to compliance with all relevant national legislative requirements if this this is an international study.
3. All serious adverse events must be reported to the Sub-Committee within 24 hours of their occurrence, via the Research Integrity and Governance Officer (ethics@liv.ac.uk)
4. If it is proposed to make an amendment to the research, you should notify the Committee of the amendment.

This approval applies to the duration of the research. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study as specified in the application form, the Committee should be notified.

Kind regards, Alison

Dr Alison Hollinrake

## Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet (PIS)



### Participant Information Sheet (PIS)

#### Title of Study

'The Role of Talent Development on Internal Succession Planning for Higher Education People Managers

#### Purpose

The purpose of this research will be to investigate the precipitants that nurture talent management for successful succession in a Higher Education institution located in Canada.

#### Participation in the study

You are invited to participate on a doctoral level research study. Before you decide whether you want to take part or not, it is important that you take the time to understand the nature and the involvement of the study. Feel free to ask any questions and remember that participation is completely confidential, voluntary, and participants are free to withdraw at any time.

The study will be conducted at McGill University and the outcome will be published under the University of Liverpool dissertation guidelines as part of the requirements for the Doctor of Business Administration Degree.

#### Target participants

The study is targeted to full-time people middle-managers from any finance department across your Institution that have one or more professional/administrative/clerical staff under their supervision, are employed in a FIN or ADM category. Participants are free to withdraw at any time and without explanation, in this case, their datasets will be destroyed upon withdrawal.

#### About the researcher

The principal researcher is embarking on this study not as part of his ongoing full-time position at the Institution, but in his role as a doctoral student-practitioner with the University of Liverpool in the UK. The research is part of the requirements towards his doctoral degree in Business Administration (also known as DBA).

The professional doctoral degree is a program geared towards shedding light to difficult scenarios that combines the academic rigor of a PhD with the action and implementation from the business sectors to bring to life the results. This study will use elements of the action learning and action research methods.

#### Research Design

The study is aimed to discover what policies, assumptions, beliefs and gaps exist in relation to talent management and succession planning at an institutional level. Information will serve to profile the challenges academic institutions are facing on this topic and to explore the perception of how talent development is embraced by managerial staff to better prepare the next generation of managers to attain intra-organizational growth.

The research will be based on action research using a phenomenological approach. Using this approach allows researcher to do an in-depth examination and understanding of the particular phenomena (how's and why's) in a real setting involving multiple sources of information bounded by time and place.

The study consists of two parts, the first being one-on-one semi-structured interviews to finance people managers in order to collect initial data. The interview will take place in or around the Institution (exact location to be determined – Library is a potential location) in a room well suited for an interview. The estimated duration is **1 (one) hour** and the interview will be audio recorded

to later be transcribed and de-identified. Information will remain confidential and properly secured and managed by researcher.

**Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the face-to-face interview will be done via a “virtual meeting” using either Microsoft teams or Webex at the time of your convenience.**

The second part of the study consists in collaborating with the focus groups (Finance & Organizational Development team) towards the modifications required to propose improvements and/or changes that meet expectations of participants. There will be **one** or a maximum of **two focus groups** were participants will go thru, validate, and discuss findings from the initial interviews. The focus group will take place in or around the Institution (exact location to be determined – Library is a potential location) in a room well suited and capable to hold the focus group. Duration of exercise is **(1) one to (1.5) one and a half hours per session.**

**Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the focus group will be done via a “virtual meeting” using either Microsoft teams or Webex at a time that is agreed by the group and researcher.**

#### **Benefits and Risks of taking part**

The benefits of this research are manifold: First, research and knowledge collected will be used to discover what policies, assumptions, beliefs and gaps exist in relation to talent management and succession planning. Second, the aim will be to produce an actionable outcome in the form of a plan or framework that could bring change to our organization by allowing participants to dialogue and learn more about the different positions and constraints of each group. Third, research will allow focus groups to work in unison whilst maintaining their respective roles. Fourth, research data will add substantial value to any institution that is facing a similar scenario, as it could serve as a reference point towards implementing the plan or framework at an institutional level.

The risks for participants will be minimal; nevertheless, the risk of examining your own backyard could air cultural and/or emotional risks, as the topic is a sensitive one. If any of these scenarios see the light, the principal investigator will intervene with a protocol to mitigate and minimize the risk exposure for participants (i.e. stop interview or focus group interaction, offer support, allow time to regroup). Another risk for participants could be the feeling of being identified; however, this is already covered under the section “participation in the study” as taking part on this research is completely confidential, voluntary, and partakers are free to withdraw at any time. Any discussions during interview and focus group remain confidential and are to be considered only for this study.

In case of voluntary withdraw, any data collected that has already been de-identified will remain part of study; nevertheless, if data is still unprocessed, it will be removed by researcher and will not be considered for the study. Note that all data will be de-identified no later than 30 days after the interview and the same applies to the focus group.

If you choose not to participate, there is no impact in your relationship with your Institution or with the researcher.

#### **Expenses and / or payments**

Whilst participation is completely voluntary and no payment or reimbursements of any type will be provided for the time allocated to the interviews or the focus group, the principal investigator will be offering participants alcohol-free light refreshments during the focus group session.

**Depending on the Covid-19 pandemic duration, the focus group might take place via a virtual meeting. If that is the case, note that there will be no light refreshments.**

#### **Data collection**

Data will be collected via audio-recorded semi-structured interviews to a representative sample of finance people managers. Data will be transcribed, de-identified, coded, and its analysis will be done using a qualitative data analysis software to visualize and interpret findings. Once data is compiled and de-identified, the aim will be to produce an actionable outcome in the form of

themes that will serve to validate the data gathering. The themes will be used as a starting point for the focus group.

The focus group will be composed of participants from finance and organizational development team from human resources. The first outcome will be to make sense and validate the different perspectives obtained from the previous step (this will be the first action research element also known as single loop learning). The next step will be to assemble the themes as a group and compare findings with previous step (triangulate the result). Following this approach, increases confidence and credibility on the research, as different methods could potentially lead to same result. It is at this stage that assumptions and new knowledge will be revised, examined and renewed. The second and last action research outcome (double loop learning) of the focus group will be to collaborate together and draft a plan or framework that will mutually meet expectations of participants. During this phase, an additional plan-do-control-act (PDCA) cycle might be required until a plan is agreed and expectations fulfilled. The time and location will be agreed a priori.

#### **Data Storage**

All data collected for this research will be safeguarded in an encrypted laptop that only the principal investigator has access to it. Recorded interviews will be transcribed and de-identified in order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. Once transcribed original audio will be deleted. Any paper data will also be safeguarded in a lockable cabinet and will be stored for 5 years until its properly disposed. The final dissertation will be housed and accessible via the University of Liverpool Library's website.

#### **Results of the study**

The outcome of this research will be made available in the form of a doctoral dissertation that will be housed physically and electronically in the library of the University of Liverpool in the UK. Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained at all times in order for participants to not be identifiable from the results.

#### **If I need to complaint about this research – who do I contact?**

"If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to contact the Principal investigator **Francisco Oliva at 514-294-5995** or via email to [Francisco.olivaromero@online.liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:Francisco.olivaromero@online.liverpool.ac.uk) and he will try to help. If you remain unhappy or problem remains unsolved then you should contact the Research Governance Officer of the University of Liverpool at [ethics@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@liverpool.ac.uk). When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name and description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

This document has been produced to act as guidance for participants. Should additional information be required, do not hesitate on contacting the principal investigator at the coordinates below.

#### **Thank you for considering your participation on this research.**

Francisco Oliva DBA Candidate – Principal researcher  
514-294-5995  
[Francisco.olivaromero@online.liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:Francisco.olivaromero@online.liverpool.ac.uk)

Thesis supervisor: Dr. David Edgar  
Professor of Strategy & Business Transformation  
[David.Edgar@online.liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:David.Edgar@online.liverpool.ac.uk)



# Appendix 4: Participant Consent Form



## Committee on Research Ethics

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Project:** The Role of Talent Development on Internal Succession Planning for Higher Education People Managers.

**Principal Researcher:** Francisco Alejandro Oliva Romero

Please initial box

- 1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated [DATE] 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 without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.
- 3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.
- 4. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Participant Name	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Person taking consent	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

**Principal Investigator:**  
Name Francisco Alejandro Oliva Romero  
Telephone 514-294-5995

## ***Appendix 5: Participant Invitation Email***

Dear ABC,

I hope you are doing great and that you are enjoying the winter!

The purpose of my email is to see if you would be interested in participating in a one-on-one interview, as I am doing a call for participants that are willing to take part in my doctoral dissertation research.

The title of my research is:

The Role of Talent Management on internal succession planning for Higher Education People Managers

Why you?

The reason behind it, is that I'm collecting data from finance managers across our Institution; therefore, your name came up as a potential participant.

I'm attaching the participant information sheet to give you more of an idea. Participation is completely voluntary, confidential, and all data collected will be de-identified.

The interview is programmed to last one hour with some open-ended questions. We could set up a time that works for you.

It will be great if I can count with your participation that will allow me (once my dissertation is completed) to become a Doctor in Business from the University of Liverpool in the UK.

Tks,

*Francisco Oliva, Adm.A, CMgr FCMI, DBA Candidate*  
Cell: (514) 294-5995

## Appendix 6: Interview Protocol

The Role of Talent Management on internal succession planning for  
Higher Education People Managers  
By Francisco A. Oliva Romero

Questionnaire topics for interview

### Research Aim

“Investigate the precipitants that nurture talent management for successful succession planning in a higher education institution located in Canada”

There will be 3 to 4 questions for each of the following areas:

1. To explore the barriers, policies, and behaviors that affect talent management at an institutional level.
2. To determine the type of challenges Canadian Academic Institutions are facing regarding succession planning at a managerial level
3. To explore the perception on how talent management is proselytized by the management categories (permanent vs temporary).
4. To profile what is the approach the institution is currently using in regards to managerial non-academic succession planning.
5. To determine what are the perceptions and attitudes of managers and immediate supervisors in regards to TM and SP.
6. To propose improvements and changes if required, to build and prepare the next generation of managers.
7. To identify the value of internal talent to attain intra-organizational growth.
8. To propose how the precipitants of talent management can be used for successful succession planning at a HEI.

### General information:

Gender:	Male	Female		
Age Group:	18-35	36-45	46+	
Education level:	College	University	Masters	Doctoral
Years of Experience:	<1 year	1-5 Yrs	6-10 Yrs	10 Yrs +
Number of employees that you supervise:	1-5	6-10	10+	