CONSIDERATIONS OF TALENT MANAGEMENT IN RETENTION OF ACADEMICS: A CASE OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO

By

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DECLARATION

I, Theressa Madzingesu Zengeya, declare that the thesis, **Considerations of talent management in retention of academics: A case of the National University of Lesotho,** submitted for the qualification of Master degree in Education Management at the University of the Free State, is my own independent work.

All the references that I have used, have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that this work has not previously been submitted by me at another university or faculty for the purposes of obtaining a qualification.

....   30 January 2020

SIGNED   **DATE**

ETHICS STATEMENT

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
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EDUCATION

Faculty of Education

23-Aug-2018

Dear Ms Theressa Zengeya

Ethics Clearance: **Considerations of talent management in retention of academics: the case of National University of Lesotho.**

Principal Investigator: **Ms Theressa Zengeya**

Department: **School of Education Studies Department (Bloemfontein Campus)**

APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to you application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: **UFS-HSD2018/0159**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully

Prof. MM Mokhele Makgalwa
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Language Editor's Letter

SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to investigate the contribution of talent management practices at the National University of Lesotho in the retention of talented academics. The study was informed by Pierre Bourdieu's social theory and Michael Armstrong's equity theory. Bourdieu's theory was used to offer insight on the various kinds of capital, and how these kinds of capital could be instrumental in the design and implementation of talent management practices in order to increase retention of talent in universities. Additionally, the equity theory was used to inform how talent management practices could be used to bring equilibrium between the different kinds of capital and the outputs or rewards, in retaining talent in the face of high competition for talent in the labour market.

Despite the successful implementation of the concept talent management in the business world and universities in Europe, the application of talent management in African universities is lagging behind. Considering that circumstances and characteristics of the private organisations are different from those of public institutions like universities, talent management in the private organisations has taken a more management perspective at the exclusion of other key stakeholders such as employees, government and the society. In that light, a literature review was conducted to offer the theoretical underpinnings of the meaning and importance of talent management to all the stakeholders. To further understand talent management narratives, an overview of talent management practices was done followed by a discussion on the current possible challenges that could affect the implementation of successful talent management practices meant to retain talented academics.

Following a qualitative methodology, data was generated through semi-structured interviews and document analysis to advance a critical and interpretive understanding of the perspectives of talent management from both management and talented academics in the university. The data revealed that, though the university is implementing talent management practices, it does not have an official and structured talent management programme, which is imperative in retaining academics. It was through the lens of understanding perspectives of different participants, that there are other factors which need to be addressed in order to effectively and successfully implement talent management in universities and retain talented academics.

This study concludes by advocating the design and implementation of a formal, contextual and structured talent management framework, in consultation with all key stakeholders, in order to increase retention of talent. Although suggestions about particular talent management practices have the potential to improve talent retention, it remains important that the government, as a major stakeholder in public universities, commits to prioritise provision of resources and afford a higher degree of autonomy to universities for them to gain competitive advantage in the academic arena

Key words: equity theory, social theory, cultural capital, talent, talent management, retention, compensation

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to two special women in my life, my mother Cecilia Zengeya and my grandmother Sabina Gwarinda who taught me to sit, walk, talk and write my name; and took care of me to be who I am today.

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ACRONOMIES

ASAC   Academic Staff Appointment Committee

HRM   Human Resources Management

HR   Human Resource

LTB   Lesotho Training Board

NUL   National University of Lesotho

SEP   Staff Exchange Programs

TM   Talent Management

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This qualitative study investigated considerations of talent management (TM) in retention of talented academics in institutions of higher learning. Thunnissen (2015:8) highlights that for the past few years, talent management has turn out to be a key management issue to gain competitive advantage; and that talent has been high in the strategic agenda of business organisations. Literature has consistently documented the need for talent management for the success and continued existence of any business enterprise and higher education is no exception. According to Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam (2013:330), most of the organisations have started using the concept of talent management and aim to be more practical in dealing with employees (talent) with the right knowledge, skills and capabilities, behaviours and relations to attain strategic business goals. Considering that the settings and characteristics of the private organisations differ from those of public institutions like universities, talent management in private organisations has taken a more management perspective at the exclusion of other key stakeholders like employees and society. Although a significant amount of publications on talent and talent management have been produced, they are more inclined to the private sector and not much has been researched on higher education/ universities. Hence, this study sought to integrate both the management and employees' perspective on talent management practices in universities in an endeavour to retain talented academics in order to gain competitive advantage.

Rudhumbu (2014:86) affirms that universities fall behind industry in TM practices and, despite the significance of talent management in driving competitive advantage, not much is known about the talent management practices and strategies that are employed to support the operations of higher education institutions, particularly in Lesotho. Universities are faced with fierce competition for talented academics globally and have to consider talent management practices and strategies to succeed and have competitive advantage in the academic world. In his study, Mushonga (2017:20)

acknowledges that the quality of higher education in Africa has deteriorated considerably due to a number of factors, which include the deterioration of infrastructure, massification of student intakes, depletion of resources, reduction in governments' financial support, academic haemorrhage, increasing student unrests in university campuses, among others. Talent management should not be adopted ideologically only, but also practically, in order to keep educational standards high by reducing the creaming of talented academics in universities.

I used the case study of the National University of Lesotho (NUL) to assess how tertiary institutions use TM practices to retain talented academic staff. This is because the National University of Lesotho, as a main state owned university in Lesotho, is facing a challenge in attracting and retaining talented academics, which has an adverse effect on the quality of its education programmes and reputation in the academic world (NUL strategic plan 2007-2012: 9, NUL strategic plan 2015-2020). In light of this, the study sought to uncover the talent management practices employed by the university from an inclusive perspective of both management and employees. Brink, Fruytier and Thunnissen (2013:180) reiterates that quality academic staff is requisite for the quality of education programmes and university research, besides the status and competitive position of universities in the academic space. This study sought to uncover talent management practices in a university since existing literature has a strong concentration on talent management in the private corporate sector, with emphasis on the need to increase productivity and efficiency of the organisation. There is a dominance of management views on talent management, at the exclusion of TM views from the employees' perspective, who are the key assets of every organisation especially in universities.

According to Thunnissen (2013:12), the term 'talent' refers to a philosopher or scientist with extraordinary insights, a great mind who realised critical breakthroughs in his or her academic field. In this study, the term 'talent' was used synonymously with 'highly gifted', 'highly skilled' or 'genius' (professors and doctors of philosophy) in the context of university. Brewster, Carey, Glober, Holland and Warnich, (2008:129) posit that in higher education, talented employees are innovative researchers, teachers and inventors who create a brand name and reputation for the universities through the high quality research outputs, patents and graduates they produce. Organisations compete

for, and depend on these employees to succeed within today's exceedingly competitive business atmosphere. The competitiveness of any university depends on its ability to retain the highly skilled academics who are able to set the tone of the educational institution to progress. Universities, similar to any other employer, compete for highly qualified and scarce employees who are characterised by high mobility within the global labour market; hence, the need for university management to have effective TM retention strategies for these highly talented employees. Collings and Mellahi (2009:305) posit that, talent management is composed of human resources management (HRM) processes that consist of systematic identification of crucial positions that significantly contribute to the organisation's sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a high potential talent pool, and improved retention and succession planning of high performing incumbents. To be successful, universities have to choose the use of modern types of talent management practices to manage their talent pools effectively. My study focused on the last decade, a time in which NUL experienced a commendable level of growth in student intake, yet at the same time also faced frequent turbulence and instability in talent retention, which affected the university's academic programmes. This study is premised on the idea that universities are critical to national social advancement and economic progression in post-colonial contexts. The importance of talent management to both the university and the talented academics is therefore, of utmost importance for the success of the universities.

1.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

While there are varied TM practices for retention, this study focused on compensation, as it is central to every employment contract for attracting and retaining highly talented people in universities. According to Armstrong (2009:736), one of the aims of TM is to recognise those with talent by rewarding quality, innovativeness and achievement, and to conduct staff inventories that identify academics with potential and those who might leave the institution. Insight drawn from compensation as one of the main determinants of retention strategies, which forms the central tenet of employment contracts, was explored as a tool to enhance

organisational retention of talented employees. Universities have to ensure their compensation (economic and non-economic) is internally equitable and externally competitive in order to reduce talent migration due to economic reasons. This raises the question of whether these highly gifted academics are rewarded what is commensurate to their scholastic investment if the university is to retain them. The concept of compensation as used to gain insight into how the issue of compensation as a retention strategy can be used by universities as a talent management practice to retain talented academics and how talented employees perceive their compensation in their work relationship.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study drew on Adam's theory of equity and Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital to reflect on talent management practices meant to retain talented employees. The theories were used in an endeavour to establish what and how TM practices at the National University of Lesotho are implemented in order to retain the highly talented employees. According to Armstrong (2009:328), equity theory states that individuals compare their job inputs (physical and mental ability) and outcomes (rewards) with those of others internally and externally, and then respond to eliminate inequalities and at times, end up leaving the organisation. Equity theory is employed in this study to ascertain how talent management can be used to increase retention of highly talented employees who are leaving the National University of Lesotho. According to Swanepoel, Erasmus, Van Wyk and Schenk (2011:478), to encourage retention of highly talented employees, reward systems must provide sufficient returns which are perceived to have an equilibrium compared to rewards received by their counterparts performing similar jobs in other institutions. The study further entails a study of Bourdieu's social theory with particular emphasis on his analyses of different forms of capital and the conversation of approaches connected with them (Ferrare & Apple, 2012:344). The conversation of the different kinds of capital accords an understanding of how talent is perceived in higher education. Bourdieu´s theory offers an understanding of the different types of capital (talent) and how they give an individual or university a certain kind of status or competitive advantaged. Olssen,

Codd and O'Neill (2004:147) highlight that, Bourdieu's theory purports that education and training expands an individual's intellectual capacity, which in turn increases productivity. When throughput is increased, it tends to increase an individual's incomes; hence, the need for equity between one's educational investment and their rate of returns in terms of economic and non-economic compensation. In this study, the equity theory and Bourdieu's capital theory are used to gain insight of the reasons why talented employees leave the National University of Lesotho, and to establish the needs and preferences of talented employees. Through the lens of different kinds of capital, the study fosters understanding of financial and non-financial compensation offered by the university to help maintain the status quo. Tygai, Singh and Aggarwal (2017:47) observe that the aim of universities is to recruit and retain people with high qualifications and credentials in society and in the academic world. Equity theory is used to establish if there is a balance on cultural capital (qualifications, experience) and the economic capital (salary and benefits) of talented academic. Where there is an imbalance, it is imperative to establish which talent management practices to employ in order to reduce or correct the imbalance.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The retention of highly talented employees presents a major challenge to all organisations in every business sector across regions and institutions of higher learning are no exception. Brink et al. (2013:38) observe that in the current world of work, where competition for talented individuals is prevalent, capable individuals have a broad choice of employment in both local and international labour markets; private and public sectors. It is of ultimate importance to view talent as the vital source of organisations' competitive advantage. This study investigates the effectiveness of talent management in retention of academia in universities with particular reference to the National University of Lesotho. It is the only state university in a relatively small country in Southern Africa and is facing a major challenge in both attracting and retaining talented employees, something which affects its competitiveness in the higher education sector.

Preliminary scrutiny of NUL records such as the Vice Chancellor's reports and NUL strategic plans shows some trends around attraction and retention of academics at

the university. The university has immense competition within the local, regional and international labour market. It is threatened by high mobility and low retention of highly qualified staff, which has affected the quality of learning, especially postgraduate programmes. Mashinini (2019:67) notes that NUL is experiencing high mobility of talented employees like professors, associate professors, holders of doctorates and senior lecturers, who are becoming increasingly difficult to replace on time. The staff turnover is more evident at NUL where posts for professors and senior lecturers are advertised more than once before they attract a qualified person. In some cases, senior posts are filled by expatriates on a fixed term contract of two years or by junior lecturers with lower qualifications and no or minimum experience. In its memo on talent management strategy for academics with high skills and excellence, the University of the Free State emphasises that recognition and competitive rewarding of highly competent employees is imperative in attracting and retaining talented employees (UFS UV 2017:1). By virtue of their nature, highly gifted employees seek jobs that pay high incomes and offer job security hence the university should engage talent management practices to curb the high mobility of talented employees.

If NUL does not take its talent management practices to retain the highly talented employees as a competitive factor, it might continue to lose its talent to other universities in the region. This may, in turn, put the name of the university into disrepute, as it will only be focusing on the basic undergraduate programmes, certificates and diplomas. Eventually, this development may compromise the quality of education programmes since the university may find it challenging to operate to its full capacity with a high composition of junior lecturers, no postgraduate programmes and a severe shortage of senior talented academic staff that gives any university a reputation and brand name. Continuous production of undergraduates may not make a great impact in the socio-economic problems of the Lesotho community. The creaming off of talented employees hinders the vision of the university to be the top African university nationally and internationally, and this affects the brand name and reputation of the university which highly qualified employees are sensitive about.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION

1.5.1 Main research question

How can talent management practices at the National University of Lesotho be adapted to contribute towards the retention of talented academics?

1.5.2 Subsidiary questions

a) What does National University of Lesotho academics and management understand about talent management?

b) What talent management practices are implemented at the National University of Lesotho in an effort to retain talent?

c) What factors influence talent management practices aimed to retain academics at the National University of Lesotho?

d) What are the perceived reasons why talented academic staff are leaving NUL?

1.6 RESEARCH AIM

The main aim of the study is to investigate the contribution of talent management practices at NUL in the retention of talented academics.

1.6.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were:

a) to determine what National University of Lesotho academics and management understand about talent management,

b) to investigate the current talent management practices at the National University of Lesotho in an endeavour to retain talent,

c) to explore the factors that influences talent management practices aimed to retain academics at the National University of Lesotho, and

d) to recommend strategies to improve National University of Lesotho talent management practices.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2013:151), a case study design, framed in a qualitative research methodology was used to ascertain the retention strategies to be used in the talent management of academic staff at NUL. Merriam (2009:23) indicates that qualitative research is about understanding a phenomenon from the participant's point of view (talented academics and management) to gain their understanding of the situation or process. In this study, this was done through a critical qualitative approach by asking important questions that led to a qualitative enquiry into the factors that influence the retention of highly talented academics in universities. Of significance to my study is the use of case study, as a qualitative approach to inquiry in trying to make sense of, and interpret the phenomenon of, retention of academic intelligentsia in universities.

A case study approach to inquiry, as indicated by Creswell (2013:98-99), was chosen, based on its key strength that it uses multiple sources and techniques in the data generation processes. That is important for one to gain a better insight and understanding of the underlying forces of talent management and retention of academics in a competitive environment. The choice of the case study as a research design was based on the way the data was going to be generated. In this study, a case of NUL is used. NUL is unique in that it is the only state university in Lesotho and is the main producer of the skilled labour that drives the economy and addresses the socio-economic problems of the nation. The case study provided a multi viewpoint analysis in which, not only the opinions and perspectives of management were considered, but also the views of other relevant stakeholders, namely; the talented academics who are directly affected by the TM policies and practices of the university.

1.7.1 DATA GENERATION

Data was generated through semi-structured interviews and document analysis such as vice chancellors' reports, NUL strategic plans, as well as recruitment and promotion policies in order to achieve insight into past and present talent management practices to increase talent retention. Academics currently at NUL and management were

interviewed face-to-face to allow interactive dialogue to elicit information on their understanding of talent and how talent management practices are applied in order to meet their needs and preferences, and facilitate their retention in the organisation. Talented academics who have departed from the National University of Lesotho were interviewed telephonically or via skype to gain insight on their experiences and perceptions and gain information in understanding the reasons that caused them to quit the organisation. According to Elo, Kaariainen, Kantste, Polkki, Utrrianinen and Kynas (2014:128), semi structured interviews have an advantage of offering the interviewee flexibility and room to further probe issues deemed important, at the same time ensuring that all aspects are covered. The Vice Chancellor's reports and NUL strategic plans provided statistics on staff mobility and operational plans to curb staff mobility. On strategic plans, I looked for information on the university's retention strategies and how they were implemented. Policy documents, such as the promotion policy, were studied to get a sense of how they promoted the retention and career growth of current staff at NUL.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Strydom (2005:57), ethics implies moral principles governing behaviour in human relationships. As presented by De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005:59), the essential ethical features include the issue of confidentiality in reporting the results and findings, accurate and honest reporting of the research, and the protection of the participants' identities, especially the academic staff who are still at NUL. I sought informed consent from the management of the university to conduct interviews and obtained permission from participants to interview them. I ensured interviewees' anonymity by protecting their identities and undertaking to destroy audio-visual tapes of interviews after transcribing the interviews. Information considered private and confidential was treated as such and data was kept or locked away where it could only be accessed with a password. According Strydom (2011:332) I familiarised myself with the ethical policy of NUL. I also obtained ethical clearance from the University of Free State, Education Research Ethics Committee through my supervisor. As suggested by Bryman and Bell (2011:136) my study attempted to protect the privacy of participants and made sure that participants were not deceived in any way and that there was no harm to participants. Since participation in this study was voluntary, participants could pull out their participation at any stage without victimisation or adverse effects.

1.10 INTERGITY OF THE STUDY

Integrity of the study has to do with the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, which affects the quality of the study's outcomes. According to Creswell (2013:246), for a study to be credible, one should have prolonged engagement in the field collecting data and use triangulation of data sources and methods, that is combining data from interviews and some documents (multiple data sources, methods and theoretical schemes). In this study, I used interviews from different stakeholders and document analysis to gather data. A detailed description of findings of the study was done to ensure transferability of findings. To increase credibility of the study, I ensured the coming together of evidence that allowed readers confidence and persuasion of interpretations and conclusions from the study. Validation, which is the

judgement of the trustworthiness or goodness of the study, was ensured. Ethical validation was enhanced by allowing equitable treatment of diverse voices of participants, in this instance, the voice of talented employees and university management. Effort was made to afford participants opportunity to provide some practical answers to research questions and open up new questions, and motivate new discourse. My study attempted to give insights to talent management that are transformative and lead to action and change in assisting the National University of Lesotho in retaining its talented employees. As presented by Okeke and Van Wyk (2015:269), self-reflection contributes to the validation of the work by ensuring that the results have a correct interpretation of the participant's meaning and that different voices are heard. In this study, validity ensured the accurateness of the findings as described by both the researcher and the participants, coupled with extensive time in the field and a comprehensive description of the findings.

1.11 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

Data gathering and successive analysis of data associated with this research was limited to the National University of Lesotho in Lesotho. Scientific demarcation was in the discipline of leadership and management, in an effort to understand talent management practices that universities can employ in order to curb the continued mobility of talented employees. Because of the unique qualities of the National University of Lesotho, generalisations of findings cannot be made about all universities.

1.12 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Introduction

The chapter provided the background and objectives of the study on the effect of talent management practices in retention of academics in higher education with specific reference to the National University of Lesotho.

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical framework

This chapter presented an extensive review of literature in relation to what other researchers covered and unearthed on the subject of TM in universities across Africa

and outside. Gaps in the literature are indicated. In addition, the chapter engaged in Adam´s theory of equity and Bourdieu´s social theory to gain understanding of talent management practices and the implications on the National University of Lesotho.

Chapter 3: Research methodology and Design

This chapter described how the study was conducted. It highlighted the research design adopted by the study. The study population and selection of participants was explained in this chapter. Finally, the chapter indicates the data generation and data analysis techniques used in the study.

Chapter 4: Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Results (Data)

Qualitative data was presented in themes in relation to research questions on the effect of talent management practices in retention of talented academics in universities. The findings from data generated from interviews and documents were discussed and presented in themes and in form of graphs and tables, where applicable. Data was discussed and presented according to the research questions of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings, Recommendations and Conclusion

This chapter summarised the study and drew some conclusions from the findings of the study. The importance of the study was highlighted, and implications drawn as well as areas for further studies. Critical comments were offered regarding talent management practices and the significance of talent management practices on the National University of Lesotho.

1.13 SUMMARY

This chapter highlighted the aim and objectives of the study on issues of talent management faced by universities, specifically the National University of Lesotho in retaining talented employees. The chapter also set out the objectives of this study, which is to identify the key talent management practices and processes that could give universities a competitive advantage in the academic world. The chapter also highlighted the theoretical framework, namely; Armstrong's equity theory and

Bourdieu's cultural capital theory used in the study to understand how talent management practices are used in retaining talented academics. Compensation or reward system was highlighted in this chapter as the main focus in retaining talented employees, as universities are vulnerable to losing highly talented employees to other universities and even the private sector. The chapter outlined the ethical issues of paramount importance in this study such as providing protection of identities of participants and seeking ethical clearance from the UFS Ethic Committee.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the dominant themes and assumptions in current TM literature, highlighting the gaps and omissions in the literature. Drawing from existing literature, the chapter elaborates the concepts of talent and talent management as they have been applied to both public and private organisations. It also highlights what literature says concerning policies, principles, processes and practices of TM in organisations, generally. An important aspect of this chapter is identifying the gaps in literature on talent management practices and contextualising the role and applicability of talent management concepts in the context of universities. The chapter also gives a brief synopsis of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that informed this study, while also clarifying the adaptation of talent management within small universities such as the National University of Lesotho. To this end, a short background of NUL is given in order to further contextualise the study.

Generally, an analysis of literature on TM in institutions of higher learning revealed the following structure in analysing available knowledge:

- That TM is still in its infancy as an area of study.
- That existing literature mainly focusses on TM in the corporate world.
- That approaches to TM usually emphasise a top down – one-way approach, rather than a pluralistic approach.
- That the value of talent management has not been embedded within higher education institutions around the world, but is small and under-funded universities.
- That in spite of the huge volume of academic literature on TM, researchers have not succeeded in developing a common meaning of "Talent" and "Talent Management".
- That most writings on talent and talent management focuses on organisational aspects of TM; marginalising what Brink, Thunnissen and Fruytier (2013:181) calls the 'Human side of TM'- that is, the value of talent management from an employee / talent's point of view.
- That gap in the field include little empirical evidence on TM practice, and academics traditionally are rarely integrated into broad perspectives of talent management,

consequently there is lack of agreement on the notions of talent and talent management.

- That despite the effort to increase retention using TM practices, there are factors affecting the design and execution of TM such as the role of government in universities, as well as the degree of autonomy in decision making and financing of these institutions. Panigrahi (2018:63), these factors influence academics to leave universities.

- There has been emphasis on organisational performance in terms of production and profitability, which is increased by improving performance of talented employees, but has failed to recognise that other players involved in TM can have different or divergent views and objectives that are different from the organisational objectives, Kabir (2010:11).

From the structure above, it is clear that researchers focus mainly on talent management in the business world and that TM in the higher education sector has been taken as a one-dimensional approach. To ensure an in-depth and comprehensive literature review, this study focuses on the following: the definition of talent and talent management, TM policies, TM practices, intended effects and outcomes of TM, and challenges associated with talent management.

Retention of academics as the main challenge is projected in the study. The three main stakeholders in the running of a university, which are the academics (talent), management and society in which the university is situated will be discussed to ascertain the effects of TM to each one of them individually and collectively. The structure outlined above for doing literature review in this study is critical for exploring talent management in universities from a human resource (HR) trajectory, which is both novel and as such must be applied to investigate the phenomenon in the higher learning context of Lesotho.

According to Scullion and Collings (2011:123), human resources practitioners have developed interest on the subject of talent management over the last decade. However, academic research in the area has developed slowly, hence the need for this study which seeks to contribute to the TM literature, especially in universities. This study sought to investigate the influence of talent management especially in universities which are meant to be the think tanks of any national economy. Aspects

covered included the best strategies to implement TM for an organisation to ensure competitive advantage in the global village. Possible challenges encountered by higher education institutions in implementing talent, management and practices, challenges of TM, and the key factors that affect TM will also be examined. Effort will be made to define the key terms, which are talent and talent management. Possible TM retention strategies, which can help universities to retain the best talent, will be highlighted in this chapter.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws from two fields of study; human resources management broadly, and Talent Management, specifically, as well as Educational Management – a field of study concerned with the functioning and operation of educational institutions. According to Bush (2003.1), the study of educational management, particularly the area of educational leadership, has itself drawn heavily on several disciplines such as sociology, political science, economics and general management. Bolam (1999:194) describes educational management as an executive function for carrying out agreed policy on educational leadership as functions, which have the responsibility for policy formulation, and where appropriate, educational transformation or a set of varieties directed towards efficient and effective utilisation of organisational resources in order to achieve organisational goals. It can be claimed that talent management constitutes one of the fundamental issues in leadership and management in universities.

Bush (2003: 2) advises that students of educational management should rely on a collection of theories in order to understand what he terms theoretical pluralism. Because of the nature of educational management in universities, this study investigates the effectiveness of talent management within a higher education context, and draws on Adam's theory of equity and Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital to reflect on TM practices in an attempt to retain the highly talented academics. This study draw insights from Adam's theory of equity and Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital in an endeavour to establish what and how TM practices at NUL help to retain the highly gifted employees (professors and doctorates).

The theoretical analysis explores employer-employee relationships adapted from HRM and organisational behaviours. The relationships between employee and employers is interrogated through the lens of approaches on human relationships, that is, equity theory and Bourdieu's theory on economics, social or cultural power to fully understand the dimensions of power within organisation. Guided by Thunnissen, Boselie and Fruytier (2013:1753), employees' perceptions on TM were examined in this empirical study where ideas, perceptions, preferences and needs of talented employees concerning their work and employment relationship, and regarding the employees' evaluation of the talent management practices used by their employer are considered. Although researchers and scholars ascribe great importance to TM, there is little known about exactly how well talent management actually works. According to Collings and Mellahi (2009:304), the current viewpoint is that talent management is based on a narrow paradigm in which the organisational perspective has been prioritised. The case study adds knowledge to broader and more nuanced theories of TM informed by practical cases drawn from a Southern African university.

2.2.1 Equity theory in TM

According to Armstrong (2009:328), equity theory states that individuals compare their job inputs (physical and mental ability) and outcomes (rewards) with those of others internally and externally, and then respond to eliminate inequalities, sometimes by leaving the organisation. Equity theory was employed in this study to ascertain the reasons why talented employees were leaving the organisation. According to Swanepoel, Erasmus, Van Wyk and Schenk (2011:478), in order for universities to encourage highly talented members to stay, rewards system, training, and promotion opportunities must provide sufficient returns. There should also be a perceived equilibrium when employees compare own institution rewards with what is received by their counterparts performing comparable jobs in other or similar institutions. As suggested by Ferrare and Apple (2012:344), in this particular study the theoretical framework entails further a study of Bourdieu's social theory with particular emphasis on his analyses of different forms of capital and the conversation of strategies associated with them. Knowledge of the different kinds of capital provides an understanding of what talent entails in higher education. Lata (2013:225) claims the

educational credentials held by individuals in dominant positions, which is talent in this context, legitimate social inequalities. The education system, therefore, has a vital role to play in retaining the status quo of talented employees. Olssen, Codd and O'Neill (2004:147) highlight that Bourdieu observes that education and training increase an individual's cognitive capability, which leads to increase in productivity. When throughput is increased, it is expected to increase an individual's income. There should be equity between one's educational investment and their rate of returns in terms of economic and non-economic compensation.

According to Talmaciu and Dugan (2013:325), a balanced attitude towards talented employees is imperative. Salary and bonuses should be awarded according to accomplishments and not universally allocated. When other employees receive a salary increase or improved working conditions than others for the same roles, it can cause discontent and result in employees quitting the organisation. Hence, the importance of balancing reward system and the worth of the employee for contributing to talent retention.

Managers should make sure that compensation at the university is internally equitable and externally competitive. As indicated by Drew (2006:119), an equity analysis should contain job classification and market pay information for each employee in a division, department or unit. Equity analysis helps management with compensation planning like observing and maintaining internal equality, evaluating possible pay growth opportunities, and decisive new hire compensation. It also allows management to make fair and competitive pay decisions, recruit, and retain talented academics by compensating them competitively. The university should use a role-contribution based sorting method, which apportions each job a role, level, and market driven salary range. Compensation experts categorize a job based on the following of factors: the job duties, difficulty, level of accountability, responsibility and other equivalent positions. According to Sanyal (1995:20), Staff Exchange Programs (SEP) aim to strengthen teaching and research, and build social capital, and are also designed to enable experts or talent in specialised fields to share expert knowledge through seminars or sabbatical visits. However, talented employees take these opportunities as stop-gap arrangements to share and compare their rewards and efforts with their counterparts in the universities they would have visited.

Equity can come in terms of opportunities between talented male and female academics. As highlighted by Chandrachud and Athavale (2015:2), one of the strategies of the University of Cologne is to give women research academics prime importance under the equal opportunities strategy by providing them with special opportunities for scholarships in selected areas and selection of academic excellence and merit in the given field. In Germany, women researchers have provision and allowances to stay with their families during their research period. This is a retention strategy.

In an employment relation, the organisation expects the employees to be productive and as the employees offer their time and capabilities, they expect equitable financial and non-financial rewards making the relationship a mutual exchange relationship. Therefore, to encourage valuable employees to stay, compensation systems should provide sufficient rewards to the satisfaction of employees when they compare with their counterparts performing similar jobs in and outside the organisation. According to Nenty and Bioa (2013:7), promotional criteria should be clearly stated in the university's promotion guidelines and reflect equity. For example, if the professor's research portfolio includes refereed journals articles, books and book chapters, cases, citation rates and impact analysis, research grants, awards, honours and conferences; the assessment for promotion should be applied equally to all candidates. According to Badat (2010:16), despite the inadequacy of public funding for higher education because of new demands and expectations on universities, there has to be equity of opportunity for quality academic training and development programmes especially in the face of limited resources. Tyagi, et al. (2017:50) concur that there should be manifest equity and fairness in the treatment of employees in order to avoid resentment and animosity in the organisation.

2.2.2 Bourdieu's theory in TM

Bourdieu's work sees the education structures of industrialised communities as functioning to valid class inequalities. According to Sullivan (2002:144), Bourdieu's theory states that fundamental powers are embedded in all forms of capital (cultural capital, social capital, economic capital and symbolic capital) that are observed are acknowledged as legitimate. Larey (2018:6) attests that these different kinds of capital may exist as material properties, or be embodied and institutionalised representing

powers in particular fields. Bourdieu (1984:727) defines economic capital as overall incomes, rural and urban possessions, shares, industrial and commercial revenues, wages, salaries and material possession. Bourdieu (1993:7) defines cultural capital as forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions or intellectual acquisitions that equip an individual with appreciation for or skills of a specific subject area or field of study. These may be educational qualifications that one holds, for example, certificates, diploma, degrees, publications etc. Cultural capital is accumulated through a long process learning through the family, society or formal institutionalised educational process. Drawing from the theory, the right kind and quality of cultural capital may then be transformed into economic capital through strategic placement in the job market. However, in most universities, possession of cultural capital does not necessarily imply possession of economic or symbolic capital, which then causes retention problems. According to Bourdieu (1988:16), employees are placed in a specific position in an organisation according to their cultural capital possession (competencies and dispositions). Therefore, earnings from the cultural capital will determine one's position in a certain world setting, and lead to the creation of social classes. According to Bourdieu (1993:43), educational qualifications assist to produce and legitimate societal inequalities, as upper class individuals are perceived as deserving of their place in the societal structure. Symbolic capital, according to Bourdieu (1993:7), refers to the resources intellectually or materially accrued by an individual based on the status, honour or recognition, which give him an advantage within a social space or organisation. In a university community, those with higher degrees, professors and associate professors are regarded as high class founded on their academic qualifications and level of knowledge. In many societies, those who work in, or go through, higher education institutions are considered as part of educated elite who, based on economic power theory, yield a higher amount of influence compared to those who operate outside of the system.

Participants in higher education wield economic and social power and influence through their cultural capital. Bourdieu's theory states that cultural capital comprises of familiarity with the overriding culture in a society, particularly the ability to apprehend and use 'educated' language. The possession of cultural capital differs with social class, nonetheless the education system determines the levels in the possession of cultural capital. Bourdieu maintains that the education credentials possessed by

individuals in dominant positions valid social inequalities. This implies that the university system has an important role in maintaining the status quo. The university system has a prerogative to strongly recognise and value the variations in educational capital in the academic market, associated with differences in competencies. This allows the according of rich rewards for talented employees. Bourdieu (1988:16) refers to economic capital, social capital (social relationships and networks) and cultural capital (credentials) as symbolic capital. It is in these social networks (social capital) that talented people get to compare their inputs and outputs with those of their counterparts in their academic circles within and outside the organisation and check for equilibrium. Nenty and Bioa (2013:9) observe that when talented employees are engaged in collaborative research with colleagues within national and international borders, it enhances their social capital as they enjoy acceptance and recognition of their academic output, resulting in meaningful academic networks. Of great importance is when the social networks open doors for talent to supervise higher degrees students like PHD, who are assessed internationally. This is seen as having been acknowledged and recognised by peer academics internationally.

Community engagement is an essential element of talent's social capital where academics engage in projects to improve and take time to learn from their communities. According to Nenty and Bioa (2013:13), community engagement is perceived as partnership between universities and their benefiting communities (national and international) for the reciprocally advantageous interchange of knowledge and resources. Drawing from Bourdieu's theory, community engagement can be viewed as a significant part of talent social capital creation, dissemination of knowledge and utilisation of such knowledge in contributing practical solutions to problems in the society. In other words, proof of community projects, recognition within communities through community engagement, are part of fulfilment of talent social capital. Insights from Bourdieu (1988:18) point to social capital through community engagement assisting to differentiate between 'academic research' carried out mainly to satisfy promotion requirements and research done to provide solution to specified problems in society.

Bourdieu (1984:303) alludes that the increase in the quantity of holders of prominent academic qualifications amongst the ruling classes could translate to transmission of power and privileges. The result is that, the cultural and educational mechanisms

would be reinforced or taken over from the traditional instruments such as the hereditary transfer of economic capital, of a forename or of capital in terms of social relations. Bourdieu stresses the role of academic credentials in social reproduction, and reiterates that cultural capital enables the attainment of educational credentials. Educational qualifications are an essential instrument through which wealth and power are transmitted, hence the argument that highly talented employees should also be highly rewarded. Bourdieu (2004:21) sees the institutionalised state as a form of cultural capital, which acts as an objective indicator of social class position. The ranking of academics into junior lecturers, lecturers, senior lecturers, associate professors and full professors is a creation of social classes in the academic arena. This is taken as a formal and seemingly objective acknowledgement of knowledge and skills and level of educational accomplishment and experience in the university set up, which calls for comparison of qualifications to create conversion rates between cultural and economic capital. For example, an academic (professor) with a certain level of qualifications can be paid a higher salary than someone with less qualification (lecturer) as the process of acquiring academic qualifications is perceived as an investment. Hence, academic achievements should yield specific profits in the academic market in order for a university to retain the highly gifted academics. According to Bourdieu (1984:734), educational qualifications are more or less an adequate indicator of the number of years of scholastic input.

Bourdieu (1993:183) describes symbolic capital as a sum total of an individual's abilities, intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgement, attitude, character and drive. Symbolic capital is a result of economic capital, cultural capital and social capital. Economic capital is the money or material things that one possesses which might be institutionalised in the form of material goods. Social capital are the networks or connections that one has with other middle class networks. When applied to talent management in higher education, Bourdieu's theory helps us understand social and economic stratification within universities. For example, the networks academics have with other academics in the academic world created when people meet at conferences and workshops. Bourdieu (1993:188) further elaborates that cultural capital is a kind of credential that is institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications, that one has because of their scholastic investment, for

which they expect a satisfactory return. In the case of universities, these qualifications would include, master's degree, doctorates, number of publications, books written etc.

Bourdieu's theory explains that the result of social, cultural and economic capital accumulates to symbolic capital, which is the translated into power. The people with power are the dominant people in society whom Bourdieu refers to as "higher –class" individuals. They have money, are the leaders of the companies, and have power over the dominated groups of the society. As stated by Bourdieu (1993:83), the dominant individuals are the ones who participate in producing services and products of high status. In the university set up, these are the people who produce Masters and PHD graduates and are employees and inventors and publish books and articles, giving the university a reputation and competitive advantage.

Commenting on Bourdieu's theory, Wadesango (2016:111) argues that lecturers and other academics in universities continue to uphold the dominant group culture because of the symbolic power they possess. Students who hail from such culture tend to excel while those from marginalised groups tend to be eliminated from the higher education system. This means highly gifted academics are a dominant or leading group in the university set up who hold the symbolic power to either stay or quit the organisation if their work needs and demands are not fulfilled. The question will be to what extent educational institutions of higher learning consider and appreciate the different cultural capitals that talented employees bring into the workplace. Erasmus, Naidoo and Joubert, (2017:5) posit that, academic and research work in universities is seen as an elite cultural resource and has become cultural capital that is highly valued in society and has high status quo. Bourdieu's theory argues that knowledge and possession of cultural capital is not equally spread according to social class, but education has been accepted and legitimated for conferring distinction and privilege to individuals who possess it.

In conjunction with economic, social and human capitals, cultural capital actively reproduces social inequalities. These inequalities are created in universities as different universities adopt diverse strategies of retaining their best talent, (Wadesango, 2016:111). Erasmus et al. (2017:5) reiterate that education systems are shaped to function in terms of the values, culture, beliefs and interests of the dominant groups in society, that is, talent that gives the organisation a reputation and a brand to

the university. Their dominance comes in the sense that, it is the existence of talented employees that enables any university to offer higher degrees and quality educational programmes. Hence, the overriding culture is referred to as cultural capital. These dominant groups are the ones who present themselves as rare, worth (professors, associate professors and doctorates) and sought after in any university or corporate world, both nationally and internationally; as their accumulated cultural knowledge and experience confer power and status to them and their respective organisations.

For the purpose of this study, Bourdieu's theory is of utmost importance for university management to understand that if universities are to remain relevant in teaching, research and community engagement, they have to put some groups of academics (talented academics) ahead of other academics in some periods and places. Application or implementation of talent management practices in a manner that recognises the talent's cultural, social and economic capital, will ensure attraction and retention of talented academics. Talent has to be given room to fully utilise their cultural capital, and has to create meaningful academic and social networks to further academic standing, that is social capital. Since talented academics have an impact on the ranking of universities, there is need to create a balance between one's cultural and economic capital. Barkhuizen et al. (2014:12) maintain that the differences in terms of remuneration between universities, public and private sectors is widening, creating social classes which drive talent to keep seeking the class they believe they belong to. Bourdieu's theory helps to highlight how universities can possibly employ talent management practices that help acknowledge cultural capital and maintain a certain social class for talented academics. This capital theory also helps universities to always be cognisant of the fact that talent always seeks maximum profitability of their investments. However, differences between cultural capital and economic capital in the holders of identical educational qualifications in universities can be because of differences in institutional compensation policies. Bourdieu's theory suggests that organisations should acknowledge the existence of the different classes of those who are best provided with both economic and cultural capital to those who are most deprived in bot respects. From Bourdieu's theory, it can be said that cultural capital is one of the conditions for access, and for talent to control economic capital. As talent rises from one class to another, the volume of economic capital is expected to rise as the volume of cultural capital also increases. In this study, Bourdieu's theory helps to

investigate the degree to which management takes into consideration and appreciates the various capitals that talent bring into the workspace. Therefore, indicators of economic, cultural and social wealth or capital have to embedded in the talent's work environment in order to increase retention of talented employees.
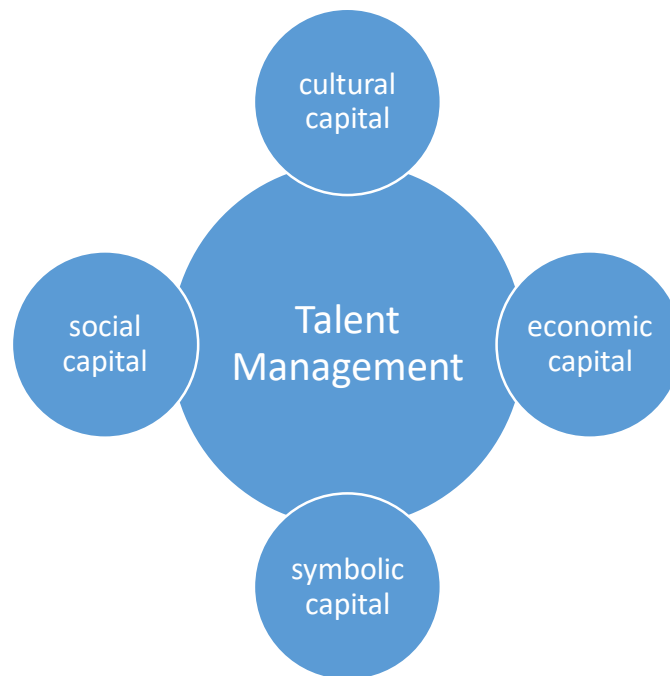
Figure 1 *Summary of Bourdieu's theory in relation to talent management*
Figure 1 above depicts that talent management practices should address and recognise all the types of capitals that are embedded in the talent.

2.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

For the purpose of this study, the conceptual framework focuses on the concept of compensation as a key aspect in talent management. The issue of compensation or rewards is imperative in this study as compensation is at the heart of every employment contract. A perceived equilibrium in compensation and one's cultural, economic and social capitals has an effect on retention of talent for an organisation to gain competitive advantage.

2.3.1 Compensation / reward management

While there are varied talent management practices for retention, this study focuses on compensation, as it is central to every employment contract to attract and retain highly talented people in universities. In this context, compensation is used interchangeably with remuneration and rewards. According to Armstrong (2009:736), one of the aims of TM is to recognise talented employees by rewarding excellence, creativity and achievement, and to conduct staff audits that identify employees with potential and those with intentions to leave the organisation. Insight drawn from Srecko and Lovel (2012:11) indicate that compensation is one of the focal retention strategies of employment contracts, and a tool to enhance organisational retention of talented employees. According to Kulno (2008:40), universities should ensure their compensation (economic and non-economic) is internally equitable and externally competitive in order to reduce talent migration due to economic reasons. This raises the question of whether these highly gifted academics are rewarded what is commensurate with their scholastic investment for the university to retain them. Can universities design the right rewards mixture, for example, compensation, development etc. to retain individual employees who are critical to the organisation? For this study, I used the concept of compensation as a retention strategy used by universities to retain talented academics, and establish how talented academics perceive their compensation in their work relationship.

As pointed out by Swanepoel, et al. (2011:475), remuneration stands at the heart of the employment relationship where there is an exchange where the employer provides rewards valued by the employee and in turn, the employee provides time, talent and

commitment towards the attainment of organisational goals. From the organisation's perspective, remuneration is an important aspect as it is a huge cost, which has a bearing on the organisation's competitive position and demands careful consideration. Srecko and Lovel (2012:5) highlight that the utilisation of rewards is imperative to the employee as it shapes and determines the work behaviour, and reflects on signs of achievement, status and power. To the employee, the remuneration levels indicate the employee's worth to the organisation. Kulno (2008: 41) notes that an organisation has the ultimate control over the nature of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards with which it intends to compensate the efforts of its employees, and can manipulate these rewards to affect employee behaviour. This poses a challenge to an organisation to design a rewards system that endeavours to meet the main objectives, to attract the right quality of applicants, retain the best employees, and at the same time ensure equity among employees. Mgaiwa (2018:3) reiterates that a major challenge, especially in government universities, is that the greater part of compensation is financed from the state budget, which could be limiting for designing lucrative reward systems. Badat (2010:16) concurs that government funding of universities is increasingly becoming inadequate because of new demands on and expectations from universities. The author proposes that higher education needs to dedicate new funding mechanisms to universities in order to offer academics quality compensation to enhance retention.

According to Netswera, Rankhumise and Mavundla (2005:36), skills migration and job-hopping is, in most cases, caused by unfavourable working conditions and unattractive remuneration packages. Shevelenko and Berggren (2008:8) note that it is imperative to know that talented employees make a disproportionate contribution towards the success of the university if talent perceive that the organisation is also making a lopsided investment in identifying their input, and developing and compensating them. Competitors mostly target the organisation's top talent to poach them and gain a competitive advantage. This is particularly so especially in South African organisations and other universities where they ask one for their current salary so that they can make a counter offer. Badat (2010:26) laments that, South African university employees are inadequately remunerated relative to occupations in the public (state, public enterprises and science councils) sector and private sector that require similar levels of qualifications and expertise. He highlights that the remuneration disparities among universities and government and private sectors are substantial and is continuing to

broaden. As a result, public and private sectors have an attraction on current academics and on Masters and Doctoral academics. This point out that there is a marginal flow of potential academics from private and public sectors to universities, to the disadvantage of universities, economy and society. According to Chandrachud and Athavale (2015:2), the University of Cologne recommended economical remuneration to promote funding of individual academics not institutions, to offer career planning for low-ranking academics in between their doctorate and professorship, as a reward management strategy to retain the best talent.

Panigrahi (2018:65) reiterates that, most academics have suffered a decline in the real value of their salaries, which resulted in universities having problems of recruitment and retention of talented academics. Srecko and Lovel (2012:7) highlight that while management of academic staff is centred on recruitment, retention, appraisal systems, training, development, and management of conditions of employment; it is the financial management and distribution where the greatest difference amongst universities can become evident. The main reason is the difference between the degrees of autonomy; with some universities having a greater degree than others do. Some universities have low autonomy where the respective ministry has a centralised financial management and the salary scales, staff compliments and promotions are decided centrally, limiting the universities' flexibility in remunerating highly valuable employees.

From Selesho and Naile (2014:298)'s work, there is general perception that academics are underpaid and overburdened with increased workloads and bureaucracy. Employees who have this feeling of being underpaid and think they have little opportunities for promotion are likely to leave the organisation, For talent, underpayment could be seen as devaluation of qualifications and disregard for their educational investment. Netswera et al. (2005:37) affirm that unattractive remuneration coupled with poor and deteriorating working conditions, lead to skills migration. Bourdieu (1984:116) attests that incomes are very unevenly underestimated and very unequally accompanied by fringe benefits, which are known to rise as one moves from one class level or rank to another. Hence, the need for universities management to design reward policies that are context based and remuneration packages, which are competitive and individual than group-based for highly gifted employees in order to curb their mobility and increase their attraction to universities. Buttiens and Hondeghem (2012:2) explain that the unstable economic

climate always puts pressure on organisations to work with restricted and constrained budgets. This is confirmed by the National University of Lesotho strategic plan (2015-2020:7) which noted that the university was operating under severe financial constraints due, in part, to diminishing government financial budget. That undermined NUL's efforts concerning recruiting and retaining highly talented staff and made it difficult for the university to offer incentives leading to low staff loyalty and morale.

Financial limitation is always a real constraint, as backed by Watson (2010:2) that there is never enough money in any organisation; instead, organisations should fragment their talent pool and invest in a different way in each segment in order to address highly talented employees' expectations and remuneration issues. He further explains that segmentation differentiates rewards for highly qualified and talented employees significantly from those with average qualifications. Kulno (2008:46), proposes the following as the bases for segmentation; the effect on the organisation when the position is vacant and when it is filled, the impact on productivity, availability or scarcity of skill level on the labour market, the cost and time to acquire the talent on the market, and the rate of salary increases on the labour market. Therefore, segmentation is vital for management to concentrate the funds where it makes the maximum difference in terms of retaining the best academics and gaining competitive advantage. Funds can be best invested in creating programmes for improved communication, appreciation, rewards or training to help retain talent.

It is imperative for universities or organisations to think creatively about approaches to non-financial rewards, which can have a positive effect in retention of talented employees. A look at a few initiatives in South Africa already shows the benefits of segmentation. For example, according to University of Johannesburg (UJ) talent management strategy (https://www.uj.ac.za), a talent management committee was set up to identify employees who fall in *level one* and *level two,* which are levels of a few highly talented employees who are truly outstanding in performance. The committee designed rewards and benefits for these specific employees as a strategy to attract and retain them. The talented employees received a non-pensionable, 'excellence' subvention of between 10%-15% (excellent level two) and 16%- 25% (excellent level one) of the total cost-to-company of the individual. The institution and pay individual

no more than 30% of the portion of annual research subsidy income generated for the institution by the individual by means of accredited research publications. In addition to this, highly skilled employees had an automatic extension of retirement age to 65 years, automatic sabbatical of one full year and contraction of the sabbatical leave cycle to five years. Granted furthermore was a generous beyond-the-norm study benefits in respect of programmes not offered at UJ for dependants studying at other SA higher education institutions, and reserved parking space.

The UJ (https://www.uj.ac.za) example demonstrates the importance of employee segmentation, but also the integration of financial and non-financial rewards as a retention strategy for highly qualified academics. As presented by Swanepoel et al. (2008:479), "total rewards strategy" is a focused reward strategy that seeks to incorporate the components of financial rewards and benefits with non-financial elements of reward, to leverage employee engagement and satisfaction as well as organisational performance and results. This approach seeks to mix extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, aligning them to the business strategy to make a holistic reward management system in an endeavour to attract and retain the best talent (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: *Total rewards model*: *A framework for strategies to Attract, Motivate and Retain Employees.*

Source: Adapted from Worldatwork (US) https://www.worldatwork.org.

According to Kantor and Kao (2008:480), consistent themes about total rewards have emerged from different consultations, which bring out a holistic focus on staffing and retention using an array of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards as the main objective of total rewards. Total rewards should be employee centred by focusing on what employees value more in the work environment, and at the same time by being distinctive through creation of an employer brand that distinguishes the organisation from its rivals. Srecko and Lovel (2012:736) suggest that total rewards are more relevant if they are linked to attainment of both individual and organisational success. These authors further note that total rewards cannot be a one-size-fit-all but have to be tailored using a best- fit approach, taking into consideration the uniqueness of each organisation in

terms of organisational culture, mission, vision and structure. Since the environment in which organisations operate are not static, so the total rewards should have incremental changes and be customised to meet different lifestyles and life stages of employees. According to Nenty and Bioa (2013:9), apart from what the talented academics are paid for their cultural capital, talent draw intrinsic motivation from the amount of funds they attract to the institution through research work as an indicator of the academic quality. As the institution recognises their income generation ability, the recognition acts as a reward to them and they are encouraged to stay with the organisation to even do more.

There are factors which influence rewards systems as summarised below.
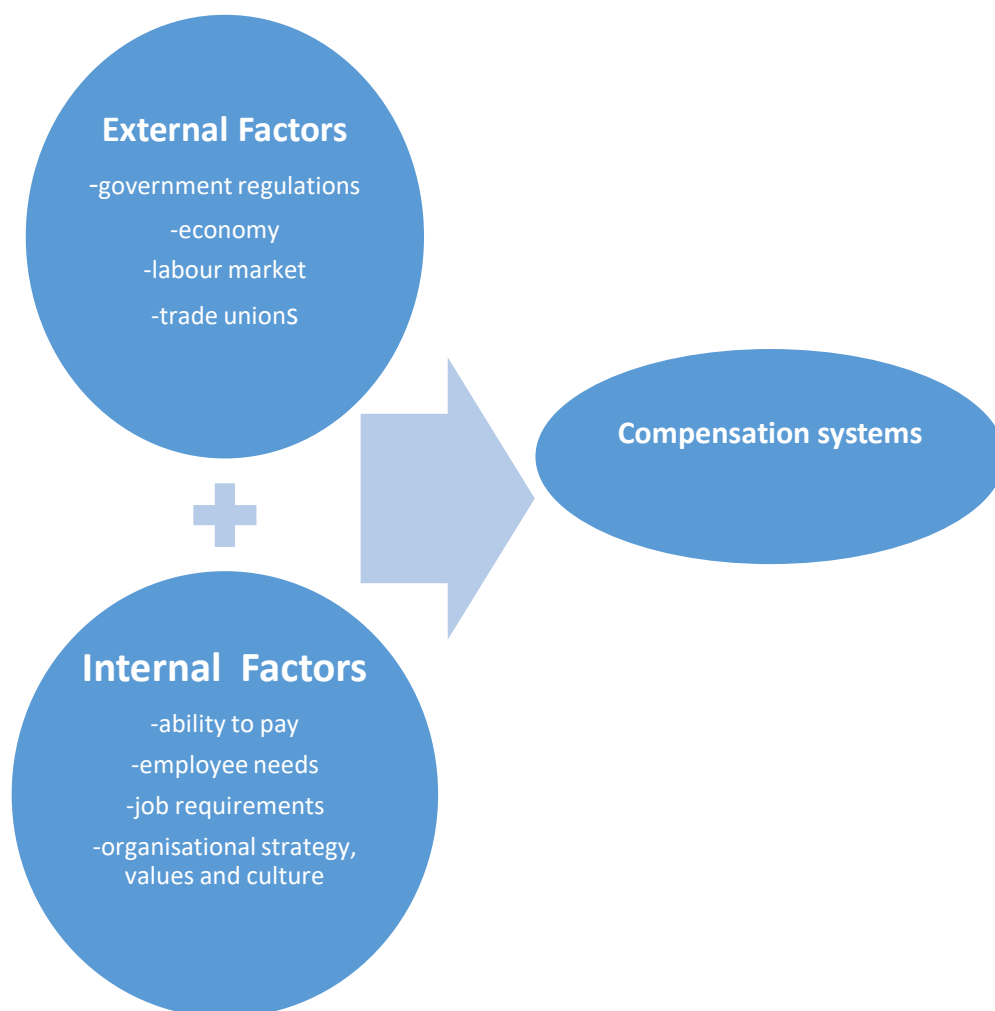
Figure 3: *Major influences on remuneration systems*
Source: Adopted from Swanepoel et al (2011:483)

Figure 3 indicates internal and external factors that influence the reward system in the retention of academics. The university system has to consider the effect of these factors and design talent management practices, principles and mechanisms for the improvement of academic remuneration. According to Rudhumbu (2014:88), cognisance of all these factors, will help the organisation to align rewards in the framework of a total rewards system that will include compensation, benefits and growth opportunities for talented academics. Moreover, universities should make an effort to provide the right rewards or compensation mix that exploit competitors' vulnerabilities in order to retain talented staff who provide the organisation a brand name and competitive advantage. University management should always be asking questions about whether talented employees believe that compensation decisions are fair and realistic, whether the organisation is losing key employees due to compensation issues, whether competitors are offering packages that are more attractive, and what the organisation intends to do in the short term to mitigate the effects of those factors.

2.4 THE CONTEXT: A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF NUL

As reiterated by Theron, Barkhuizen and Du Pless (2014:1), the case study of National University of Lesotho (NUL) in Lesotho, is located within current discourse on the origins, growth, development and challenges facing universities in Sub Saharan Africa. In such discussions, it is generally acknowledged that the standard and quality of university education in Africa has declined considerably as a result of a number of factors which include the deterioration of infrastructure, massification of student intakes, depletion of resources, reduction in governments' financial support, academic haemorrhage and increasing student unrests in university campuses, among others (Mushonga 2017:19). In that regard, talent management should be adopted, not only as an ideology, but also practically and contextually in order to keep the educational standards high by reducing the creaming off of the highly talented academics at NUL.

Mashinini (2019:67) notes that NUL is the main and oldest state university in Lesotho, and the nation relies on it as the main producer and supplier of national labour in all the sectors of the economy. NUL was created in the early 1930s as one of the first

universities in Southern Africa and was central in hosting students from across the countries in Southern Africa, with very close links to Botswana and Swaziland (NUL Strategic Plan 2005). As the only university in a country of nearly two million inhabitants, NUL is poised to contribute to the economic growth and development of this country (see NUL strategic plan, 2007-2012: 5). Since its establishment, the National University of Lesotho has made substantial contributions to the supply of quality skilled work force in different fields, nationally and regionally. The achievements that NUL has made were not devoid of challenges, the most serious ones being financial, weak institutional measures for coordinating the efforts of different departments, and the existence of certain programmes that were irresponsive or irrelevant to the needs of the nation (Mashinini 2019:69).

According to Mushonga 2017:13, the National University of Lesotho has a unique history in the Kingdom of Lesotho, which has three types of Higher Education institutions namely University, Institute and Polytechnic. The National University of Lesotho is the primary university, the only state university in the country ever since 1945, and the only university until 2008. As presented in the NUL strategic Plan (2015-2020:3), NUL was one of the first universities in Southern Africa that contributed to educating a whole generation of young black African academics during the colonial and apartheid eras. Started in the 1930s, the university grew to include satellite campuses in Botswana and Swaziland, entrenching its role as a driving force for African intellectualism through the 1950s to the late 1990s. Bosathu and Limkwokwi are two recently established private universities, but NUL's place as the main producer of the work force for the Lesotho labour markets is still unrivalled. The fact that it remains the only state funded university in the country places it at the centre of the production of the country's labour needs, making it critical to Lesotho's social and economic growth in post-colonial context. According to Botlhole (1974:1), the pioneering university, PXIICUC, began with only five students and four priest lecturers in 1945. By 1963, the student number grew to 175 (100 males and 75 females) with an academic staff compliment of 20. By 2014, the NUL student population rose to over 10 000 students with 370 academic staff and approximately 308 non-academic staff across seven faculties.

This study focused on the last decade from 2007 to 2019, a time in which NUL experienced a commendable level of growth in student numbers, yet at the same time

also faced frequent turbulence and instability in terms of talent mobility. As indicated in the NUL Strategic Plan (2007-2012:4), NUL seeks to achieve its ambitious vision of being, "*the leading African university responsive to the national socio-economic needs, committed to high quality teaching, long-life learning and research and community service, respected nationally and internationally",* though it faces a few challenges. Among many of its challenges, is the aspect of human resources capacity, as the financial challenges and resultant instability compromise service to students and staff. Thus, human resources processes are key in the achievement of the university's mission and set goals, through the production of high calibre graduates as stated in the mission statement. The success hinges on the university's ability to retain the highly qualified employees to deliver on those expectations, and give the university a brand name and competitive advantage.

NUL strategic plan (2017-2020:5) acknowledges that there is a shortage of high calibre academics due to continuous academic mobility exacerbated by proximity to SA and its inability to attract the best academics. Hence, the National University of Lesotho has suggested in the strategic plan, recognition of high achievers and provision of incentives as well as opportunities for continued career development in order to attract and retain talented academics.

Table 1: *NUL statistics for number of professors, associate professors and doctorates degree holders, out of 374 academic staff.*

PhD's		ASSOCIATE PROFESSORS	FULL PROFESSORS
Faculty of Agriculture	13	1	3
Faculty of Education	22	1	0
Faculty of Health Sciences	5	1	0
Faculty of Humanities	31	3	4
Faculty of Law	6	1	0
Faculty of Science and Technology	32	9	4
Faculty of Social Sciences	16	1	2
Institute of Extra Mural Studies	3	0	0

Source: National University Strategic Plan 2018-2020

Nenty and Biao (2013:1) posit that professors and doctorates are the soul of the university, which itself is a worldwide liberal space for the development of human

intellect and genius. These talented academics, in terms of their number and quality, play an imperative role in the global ranking of universities and impact on quality of postgraduate and undergraduate educational programmes and the university brand name. The above table shows that the overall number of professors at the university was below 20% even though there was a considerable number of academics with PhDs. This could possibly indicate a challenge in the retention of academics who are highly qualified and the need to employ talent management practices and policies to curb talent mobility. The discussion of the NUL is positioned within boarder considerations of the importance of higher education in postcolonial contexts in Southern Africa. As expressed by Badat (2010:14), it not be disputed that higher education is critical to the resolution of complex economic and social problems that the world and Africa faces today. The author further elaborates that, like in any part of the world, Southern Africa university education is the main source of skills and knowledge, and provides the human resources for every sector of the economy. It is responsible for generating sustainable socio-economic development, addressing the growth needs of society and the problems and challenges of the wider African environment.

Kabir (2010: 622) highlights that, higher education contributes to the development, monitoring, evaluation and implementation of social policies as well as improving the quality of schooling, health care and other public services. It will be naive for universities to focus on cultivating knowledge, capabilities and providing skills that enables university graduates to contribute to the development of the economy and not give equal consideration to the desires of academics who are the think-tanks and change agents. It is in this light that this study focuses on the management of talent to ensure that universities continue to retain the best talent who will produce high quality personnel for the public entities, parastatals and private sector. According to Erasmus, et al. (2017:4), the quality of university academic staff is a major determinant for its continued competitiveness, prosperity, and progress; and puts the university reputation in the spotlight in the global world and marketability of its graduates.

There is a growing collection of literature on the developments or value and challenges of higher education in sub-Sahara Africa. Seddoh (2003:34) acknowledges that African universities are faced with a number of challenges such as deteriorating infrastructure, massive increase in student numbers, shrinking resources and

decrease in government subventions, high academic staff turnovers, and increasing disturbance due to students and staff unrest on university campuses, among other issues. Moreover, as already alluded to earlier, one of the biggest challenges is that of staff retention. While there is a growth of research focus on challenges faced by universities in Africa, there seems to be a dearth in literature on innovative ways to address some of the key management challenges within African universities.

Recent literature on higher education in Southern Africa, has focused on issues such as transformation and highlights massive challenges that bedevil universities in Africa in the postcolonial era. The work of Zeleza (2007:19) and Mamdani (2008:7) has been instrumental for understanding the historical developments of universities in Africa. For example, increasingly in the 1990s, African universities came under pressure from both internal and external forces, with issues of the privatisation and commercialisation of state owned universities infiltrating almost all African campuses (Mushonga 2017: 21).

There is almost a total absence of research and writings on higher education/universities in Lesotho. Perhaps the closest existing comprehensive attention to NUL is a recent PhD thesis by Mushonga (2017) whose work is a historical analysis into relationships of power between government, community and the university in the African continent today. In his work, Mushonga (2011:85) noted that, in the 1990s, NUL started to struggle with its anticipated role in national development, due to a limited budget. He further notes that NUL was constrained by an acute reduction in government subvention coupled with a wage bill made up of approximately 90% of the university budget. That led to the role of NUL in nationwide development seemingly being compromised. Mashinini (2019:69) observes that this was evident through the transformation process of 2002-2004, which saw management introducing new salary structures that saw senior management staff at par with professors and lumping together academics who belong to different ranks into a uniform salary structure, irrespective of variance in qualifications, work experience and publication records (Mushonga, 2017:201). These salary adjustments could be one of the possible reasons that caused high mobility of talented academics leaving the organisation after frequent strikes and demonstrations, court orders, lockouts, and withdrawal of salaries.

2.5 TALENT AND TALENT MANAGEMENT

In order to have in depth comprehension of the value of TM in institutions, such as universities, it is key to define what "talent" in the context of universities means. A number of scholars have already devoted huge attention to defining concepts such as talent and talent management. Brink, Thunnissen and Fruytier (2013:181) highlight that the concept of talent has been topical in the area of performance such as sports, dance, music and entertainment; an aspect that has given a narrow view of the concept. Schuler, Jackson and Tarique (2011:507) further point out that since the 2000s, talent has been top on the strategic agenda of organisations, and in the past decade, talent management has turn out to be a key management issue. Moreover, several researches show that industry leaders consider finding talented employees to be the most important managerial preoccupation for any business organisation. The growing attention to talent and the associated limited availability of talented academics is due to factors like high agility and globalisation. Relatively very little literature exists that focuses on talent and talent management in academia, and these exist mainly as case studies in the European context.

According to Tyagi et al. (2017:48), in the academic field and in human resources management (HRM), talent and TM seem to be relatively poorly developed research areas, and the terms talent and talent management lack a clear distinct meaning, as many scholars conflate TM with HR concepts such as workforce forecasting, succession planning or management development. In terms of discussions and writings on talent management, Erasmus, et al. (2017:2) identify a surge in the debates and articles online and in books, focusing on TM. However, she also argues that though researchers have produced a significant amount of publications on talent and TM over the past ten years, the amount of academic peer reviewed literature on talent management is lagging behind, leading to a gap in between talent management experts and academic interest in the subject. Brewster, et al. (2008:128) define 'talent' as the sum total of a person's abilities, his intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgement, attitude, character, drive as well as his ability to learn and grow. Schuler et al. (2011:507) argue that the terms, " talent', 'highly- gifted' or 'genius' are often used to refer to a philosopher or scientist with extraordinary insights, or a great mind who realised critical breakthroughs in his or her academic field". The

dominant theme in literature on TM include treatises on the concept that talent equals human capital or talent pools with reference to talent management in academia.

While it is agreeable that all staff in any organisation are important to achieving organisational goals, authors have distinguished between two clusters of talent that are possibly applied in a university set up; inclusive talent and exclusive talent. According to Erasmus, et al. (2017:3), inclusive talent refers to everyone in the organisation who is capable of contributing to the organisation's objectives, which, in the case of universities, can be used to mean the entire workforce of the university. Exclusive talent refers to particularly efficient employees with a great potential to make a significant impact on the organisation's productivity. The authors argue that exclusive talent should be differentiated from the rest of the workforce based on their exclusive performance, the positions they hold, or their functions in the organisation.

In this study, following Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam's (2013:332) typology, exclusive talent refers to holders of doctorates, associate professors and professors or researchers of new information and theories, and inventors of new technology. This study pays attention to the exclusive talent approach and focuses more on the selected group of doctors of philosophy, associate professors and professors as the main group that gives NUL a brand name and competitive advantage, contributing to the institution's teaching and learning, research and community service. However, in literature, Collings and Mellahi (2009:306) propose a that hybrid approach (a combination of inclusive and exclusive talent) is ideal since the exclusive talent approach has the tendency to segment and differentiate some groups of employees as being more valuable to the organisation than others are. Nonetheless, for small universities such as NUL, which struggle to attract and retain highly skilled and experienced academics due to competition with more established universities, it is more useful to focus on exclusive groups to create systems that retain this group of experts. Studies have shown that comparatively, this group has a higher level of turnover, and is very difficult to replace. However, the exclusive talent approach to TM has the shortfall of limiting social capital and destroying teamwork among employees.

According to Collings and Mellahi (2009:306), another dimension used to define talent, is talent as a subject approach, where people are the talent; and talent as object approach, where talent is the characteristics of the people such as their skills,

knowledge base, competencies and abilities. In the exclusive approach, Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries and Gonzalez-Cruz (2013:291) define talent as "…...those employees who rank at the top in terms of capability and performance and who make a significant difference to the current and future performance of the organisation". In other literature, these employees are classified as high performers with great potential or "A- players".

According to Talmaciu and Dugan (2013:323), the exclusive subject approach of talent aims at a more specific group of employees, a segmentation or differentiation of a small workforce, focusing on employees who rank at the top in terms of capability and performance. Though some authors criticise segmentation, there is some general agreement that TM should concentrate on key pivotal positions, namely; those that give an organisation competitive advantage and focus on strategic jobs that provide high impact rather than non-strategic jobs or jobs with marginal impact.

For this study, I adopted the definition of talent from the exclusive subject approach where TM should have more focus on key employees or positions that make a remarkable contribution towards the competitiveness of the universities in the academic world. According to Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam (2013:337), where the exclusive approach to talent is used, it may have a negative effect where talent management will destroy the spirit of teamwork among employees and create the spirt of competition, which can have an effect in retaining exceptional employees. Though the 'exclusive-subject- approach' emphasises selection based on high performance, it is criticised as leading to "the happy few", killing morale, and marginalising those seen as non-specialists. Brink et al. (2013:183) posits that organisations that value internal talents have better chances of adapting and succeeding in the face of competition more than their rivals in the academic labour market do. According to Talmaciu and Dugan (2013:321), the ability of an organisation to attach importance to competencies and knowledge of talented employees and to attract talented employees increases the internal talent pool to the advantage of the organisation.

It is clear from available literature and varied definitions of 'talent' that most characterisations of talent define talent from the management's perspective. However, it is imperative for talent to also be defined from the other stakeholders' perspectives,

which are the individual talent themselves and the society. A perspective that considers the views of, not only management, but that of talented employees as well as society will give the meaning of the term talent a pluralist dimension in TM. As observed by Erasmus et al. (2017:4), overemphasis on outstanding performance by talented human capital may be seen as going against the societal value of organisations and goals such as diversity, employees' rights and equity. These aspects have a positive outcome on TM as they increase general societal well-being and boost community reputation of organisations, assisting them to attract better quality employees. Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam (2013:337) view talent management as all the functions of human resource management with a focus on attracting, deploying, developing, retaining and succession planning and it emphasizes on talented people.

Lewis and Heckman (2006:140) posit that talent management has emerged as a popular term to cover a wide variety of human resource management practices with a focus on talent pools and talent generally, but there is no definite agreement as to what exactly is talent management. Rudhumbu (2014:87) presents TM as processes that facilitate the growth and career progression of talented and skilled academics in an organisation, by means of formalised procedures, processes, resources and policies. The author further alludes that when other aspects like talent acquisition, talent development, performance management, manpower planning, performance management, succession planning and retention strategies, are included in talent management, it will be referred to as integrated talent management. The competitiveness of a university is determined by its capacity to retain the highly skilled academics who are able to establish the tone of the university to move forward. In other words, TM means organisations should be intentional and thoughtful in their endeavour in sourcing, attracting, selecting, developing, and promoting and advancing academics through the university. Talent management is premised on the idea that employees are an organisations' most valuable asset. Armstrong (2007:390) defines TM as an integrated set of activities that ensures that the organisation attracts, retains, motivates and develops the talented people it needs presently and in the future. The aim is to prevent the mobility of talent, taking into consideration that talent is a major corporate source. Buttiens and Hondeghem (2012:6) emphasise that TM is a collection of processes or activities that need to be integrated to meet the current and

future needs of the organisation's talent pool. This approach emphasises on institutions making a deliberate formal approach in identifying and developing exceptional individuals in an organisation (See Figure 4).
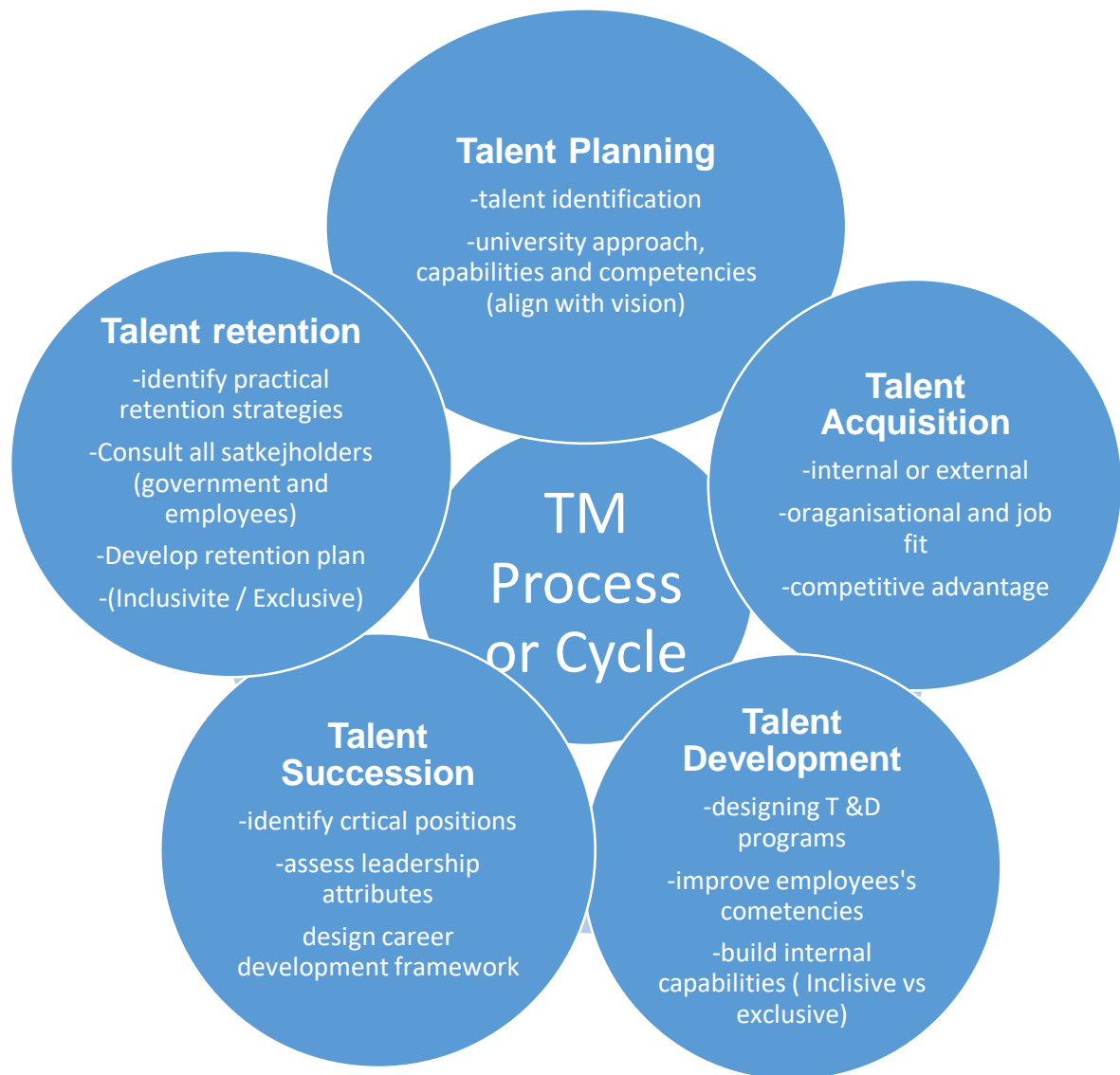
Figure 4: *Talent-management process*

Figure 4 above depicts what Lynch (2007:2) describes as a proactive and integrated series of management actions designed to ensure that an organisation has a supply of best fit, highly productive individuals in the right job and at the right time. The diagram explains that TM should be seen as an ongoing process intended to ensure that the organisation has talent ability to meet its current and future talent requirements. It is the responsibility of management to integrate talent planning, talent

acquisition, talent development, talent succession framework, and talent retention plan into a seamless process in order to gain competitive advantage. Effective integration of these key TM processes in no particular order but according to the context enables the organisation to increase productivity, efficiency and competitiveness as a result of improved attractiveness, retention of talent. Savaneviciene and Vilciauskaite (2017:245) note that a holistic and integrated approach to TM leverages the highest competitive advantage from employees, which becomes embedded in the organisation. When TM processes are consistently in the thoughts and actions of management, overtime TM becomes the culture of the organisation.

Underscoring the importance of talent management as a formal process, as defined by Thunnissen (2013:31), are activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions, which differently contribute to the organisation's sustainable competitive advantage. The processes include development of a talent pool of high potential and high performing incumbents to fill key roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents. The purpose of these processes and activities is to safeguard employees' continual commitment to the organisation. According to Collings and Mellahi (2009:306), the definition clearly distinguishes what processes should be done in order to give an organisation competitive advantage through TM in terms of identifying key positions and developing the talent pool to fill those positions. However, the definition does not clearly state how these highly talented employees will be managed to warrant continuous commitment (retention) to the organisation. A major criticism on this definition is that retention does not come out strongly as a crucial point in talent management.

Talent management from an inclusive perspective includes the implementation of integrated human resources strategies to attract, develop, retain and productively utilise employees with the required skills and abilities to meet current and future needs (Barkhuizen 2014:120). Talmaciu and Dugan (2013:320) simplify TM to mean having the right people in the right place, at the right time and at the right cost, representing the totality of systems and processes that allow the entity to attract, develop and preserve highly qualified employees. They emphasise that effective TM requires a profound understanding of competencies, behaviours and potential of the organisation to align and coordinate the present objectives of the organisation to the future

objectives. Due to the competitiveness and dynamism in the academic world, talent management solutions have to play a dual purpose, that is, to identify, develop and adapt talent to strategic organisational goals and connect these goals to the individual talent goals and their long-term development in the organisation (Savaneviciene and Vilciauskaite, 2017:246).

The work of Talmaciu and Dugan (2013:322) highlight five basic elements of TM that can make a difference: a talent management thinking style, generation of appealing and valuable offer in order to bring in the organisation the most talented employees on the labour market, constantly recruiting talents, developing and grooming leaders, differing and upholding TM policies. A crucial point that they make is that an organisation distinguishes itself through the nature of activities and concepts implemented by the talented staff more than through the acquisition of modern technologies used for production, thus considering that TM becomes the main agenda of human resource experts. Erasmus et al. (2017:6) note that talent management should not just be about processes but also be a strategy that must not lack any manager and employee's perspective. The fundamentals of any talent retention strategy requires good management that knows how to intensify the level of talent involvement that can step up talent retention in universities.

Keissling and Harvey's (2006:1310) work is part of a large corpus of literature that seeks to highlight top practices in the execution of talent management. These authors observe that a good TM code focuses on the inventory of current personnel and identification of anticipated needs for both the organisation and the key employees, and identification of retention strategies and maintenance of employee loyalty, not just the participation of leaders in the organisation. From the various definitions by different authors, it can be viewed that TM encompasses a number of aspects, one of the main being emphasis on attraction, development and retention of highly talented employees. Talent management has to be in tune with the organisational strategies and the career goals of the individual talents with the purpose of gaining a competitive advantage. One can also pick that TM is not a once off thing but an on-going process embedded in the organisational system. Wellins, Smith and Scott (2007:7) have identified six core functions of TM as; recruitment, retention, leadership development and succession, on boarding and off-boarding, internal movement and redeployment, and incentive for performance (See Figure 5 below).

Recruiting	Retention	Leadership development and succession
on-boarding and off-boarding	Internal movement and redeployment	Incentive pay for preformance
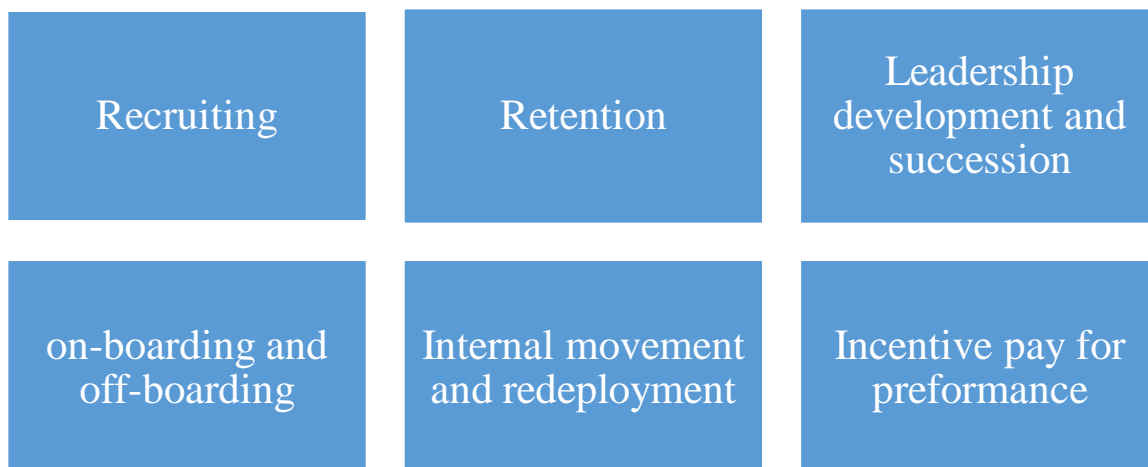
Figure 5: *Functions of Talent Management*.

Source: The Best Practice Institute (BPI) (www.bestpracticeinstitute.org)

Though some of the models may not be a perfect fit within universities because most were developed with the corporate world in mind, it is clear from literature that one can discern a difference in talent management perspective between the two key players in a university; the management and the academics. From the organisation's perspective, TM is meant to increase production and profitability, while in universities it can be used to maintain efficiency and flexibility in the management of academics or personnel. This is the economic goal. The employees or talent apart from the economic value of TM has non-economic goals that TM has to satisfy. These include opportunities for personal professional growth, which result in an upward mobility in employees' career ladder, and challenging work for highly skilled individuals. Barkhuizen, et al. (2014:118) maintain that universities have a mandate to make available a self-regulating intellectual space to nurture, promote, attract and retain talented and knowledgeable staff who are key to economic growth and sustainability.

2.6 VALUE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF TALENT MANAGEMENT TO UNIVERSITY STAKEHOLDERS

Talent management has a multi-value approach that is economic and non-economic at the individual, organisational and societal level. Though there is wide literature on the role of TM in the business world, its importance in the context of universities has not been highlighted. Thus, while TM is the most talked about concept in the corporate world, yet, according to Chandrachud and Athavale (2015:1), talent management is only just emerging in Indian universities that are also increasingly faced with the challenge regarding the management of highly talented academics. In South Africa, realising the importance of TM, a few universities have begun to put in place TM policies in a bid to attract and retain high-level academics. These include University of Johannesburg and University of the Free State.

Below is a summary of the value of talent management to an organisation.

	Individual level	Organizational level	Societal level
Economic value of TM	· Financial rewards · Job security	· Profitability · Organizational flexibility · Efficiency and effectiveness · Competitive position	· Economic condition and (inter)national competitive position of an industry, region, or country
Non-economic value of TM	· Meaningful and challenging work · Growth and social needs · Fair and just treatment	· Legitimacy	· Social responsibility, i.e., contributing to the social/ moral development of society

Figure 6: *Value of talent management*
Source: Thunnisen, Boselie and Fruytier (2013:55)

As argued by Brink, Thunnissen and Fruytier (2013:182), talent management is becoming a key strategic human resource management issue for universities, and the ability to attract and retain top talent is rapidly becoming a key issue for human resource management at universities. Chandrachud and Athavale (2015:6) note that literature shows that universities are competing for highly qualified employees and that academic disciplines are already suffering from a chronic shortage of talented people in some countries. Collings and Mellahi (2009:309) argue that the composition and

quality of academic staff is important for the quality of education programmes and university research, as well as research output and competitive position of universities and institutions in the academic community. These authors further point that developments such as globalisation and the increased agility of academics have led to a shortage of talented academics in many disciplines within universities all over the world. In fact, many universities are forced to move towards what Brink et al. (2013:180) call the managerial model (rather than a collegial model). As many universities face challenges and pressure for financial sustainability, amid dwindling financial support from the state, academic talent and performance has become a key area of concern for universities around the world. It is important to also note that current literature on talent management rarely pays attention to the implementation process, poor processes and context (Brewster, et al., 2008:326).

An important aspect that emerges from literature on talent management is that TM is usually approached from a top-down approach. For instance, Thunnissen, Boselie and Fruytier (2013:54) argue that TM has a shortcoming of being managerial centric, and that it tends to focus on the organisational objectives of increased performance, effectiveness and efficiency excluding other stakeholders; the employees and the society. They suggest that a distinction should be made of the value of TM to different stakeholders, which are the organisation, the individual talent and the society. As highlighted by Barkhuizen (2015:12), talent management has economic benefits to the organisation, which are, increased workforce flexibility, profitability, organisational performance, creation of a brand name for the organisations and creation of employee value proposition. Every organisation aims to attract the best talent on the labour market so TM helps to position an organisation as an appealing employer to the best and highly talented employees, using best talent management practices in recruiting and retaining. This, in turn, creates a reputation and a brand name for the organisation that makes it appeal to the labour market and gives the organisation advantage over its competitors.

According to Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam (2013:332), the primary reason for the significance of talent management is that effective talent management certifies the organisation to attract and retain critical talents. The other reason is that employees' engagement in talent management is fundamental to engaging employees in the

organisation. Consequently, the mixture of these issues is a major determining factor for organisational success and a vital concern for universities.

Chandrachud and Athavale (2015:5) posit that talent management helps universities to raise up the required academic ranking in the academic world because of research output, as well as teaching and professional development of retained professors, associate professors and doctorate holders. Kiessling and Harvey (2006:1310) note that the notion of talent management can benefit and enhance knowledge management. The authors regard knowledge as the most substantial asset in a university, and as one of the intangible sources of competitiveness. Hence, it is imperative for individuals delegated to talent management to recruit academics with tacit knowledge and relevant work experience and retain them in the organisation. It is imperative to commit to invest in their training and development. Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam (2013:332) further observe that the other importance of talent management is to assist organisations to emphasise the purpose of knowledge creation, knowledge sharing and retention. Since knowledge is considered as one of the intangible sources and asset for competitiveness, it leads to organisations like universities having more understanding of collaboration and connection concerning talent management and knowledge management resulting in talent management proficiency. This calls for the knowledge, skills and capabilities of talent to be expanded and acknowledged as a vital source for competitive advantage.

Despite the value of TM to organisational sustainability, it has been observed that while talent management tends to have more value to the organisation, there are also needs and goals of individual employees that can be achieved in the process of talent management implementation. In commenting about individual talent, Kalleberg and Marsden (2013:255), highlight the fact that over the past three decades, the worker's job preference orientations have changed from where a sense of accomplishment and importance were highly ranked aspects of a job, to where talented employees now emphasise on jobs that offer competitive salaries and provide security. Hence, employees find value in TM when the characteristic they find as most important is addressed and their preferences met which is the economic value outcome of TM to individual talents. Employees prefer their efforts to be materially or financially rewarded and their jobs secure presently and in the future. For example, rather than

short-term contracts, it calls for organisations to thoughtfully plan for long tenure for their employees and avoid short-term contracts. Paauwe (2009:339) highlights the fact that employees attach value to meaningful, challenging work, in addition to growth needs (personal achievement, learning and career development) and social needs (meaningful work relationships and interactions with co-workers) which are embedded as non-economic value of TM practices. Thus, at the individual level, promotion opportunities, challenging and resourceful work environment, learning and development opportunities, and fair and just treatment of employees, are important non-economic talent management outcomes.

Table 2 represents a summary of individual outcomes relating to TM in the workplace.

Table 2: *Individual outcomes relating to TM in the workplace*

TALENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES	Psychological Contract	Work engagement	Motivation	Job Satisfaction	Burnout	Happiness	Meaningfulness
Talent alignment		X					
Talent acquisition		X	X	X	X	X	
Talent review process	X	X	X	X	X		
Talent responsibility		X					
Talent resources		X					
Talent culture		X					
Talent results		X					
Workforce planning	X		X		X	X	
Staffing	X		X	X	X	X	
Talent retention practices	X		X	X		X	X
Performance management	X	X	X			X	
Talent development		X	X	X	X	X	

Source: *Adopted from Barkhuizen (2015:10), http://www.nwu.ac.za*

As shown on the above table by Barkhuizen (2015:10), TM has a significantly positive impact on individual talents on psychological contracts, work engagement, motivation, job satisfaction, happiness and meaningfulness. These factors have influence on the employee loyalty to the organisation eventually.

According to Brewster, et al. (2008:324), in as much as talent management has a positive effect on the organisation and the individual talent, society also benefits from organisations through provision of employment opportunities, distribution of income to its citizens and production of goods and services. For that reason, they argue that TM affects societal well-being as well in terms of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Social responsibility is when an organisation accepts full responsibility and chooses to

go beyond viability to contribute to the development of society by creating economic value that addresses the needs and challenges of the society the organisation is operating from (Talmaciu and Dugan 2013:328). From the varied definitions, one can depict that the focus of TM is mainly on the high performing groups and those with high potential at the expense of the rest of the employees. The definition can depend on the context of the organisation, hence there is not one agreed definition for talent management.

2.7 TALENT MANAGEMENT: PRINCIPLES, PRACTICES AND PROCESSES

There is an increasing body of literature that focuses on principles and practices of TM in organisations, highlighting the importance of matching organisational goals with the aspirations of highly skilled employees. From various authors, the main talent management processes include, recruitment and selection of talent, training and development, retention strategies and rewards management for talented employees. Swanapoel, et al. (2008:123) have suggested that existing policies and strategies regarding attraction, recruitment, development and retention of employees should be reviewed and aligned with the organisational strategy and the individual career objectives of the employees. Throughout the organisation, all stakeholders should know the integrated, aligned strategies and specific action plans explicitly.

According to Barkhuizen et al. (2014:13), developing the right talent mind set in organisations is one of the strategies of TM to be regarded as part of the leadership mind-set. The authors further elaborate that this mind set supports the idea that individuals have potential value for an organisation, and that they are worth investing in and developing. Therefore, the right talent mind set is critical for an organisation's competitive advantage as it benefits both the individual and the organisation. Brewster, et al. (2008:324) identifies talent mind-set as being rooted belief aimed at having better talent at all levels in order to be able to outperform the competition. The belief hinges on the understanding that best talent is a critical source of competitive advantage that pulls together all other performance levers. Another strategy is thinking strategically about TM (Barkhuizen et al., 2014:11), for example, is your TM strategies integrated with the organisation's business strategy? Who are the key stakeholders in the talent management process? Vice chancellors, human resource department and individual employees are all key role players in the effective implementation of talent

management. Human resource professionals have an important role to play in establishing TM strategies that are in alignment with the business strategy.

Talent management is an emerging area in universities and is a top agenda and concern in the corporate world. Chandrachud and Athavale (2015:3) and Brink et al .(2013:180) highlight that TM practices in European universities, especially in Germany, were established over decades and well supported by government policies and university strategies. The authors acknowledge that there is much awareness of the significance of TM, and the need for its implementation as a main driver for innovations, and of establishing Germany as a knowledge based society. It is well accepted that the knowledge triangle, constituting higher education, research and innovation, are the key drivers of Europe's economic growth and employment. As indicated by Chandrachud and Athavale (2015:2), the Europe 2020 agenda also addresses concerns of TM and educational management, directing producers of excellent research, educational institutes and innovators throughout Europe. Their work also highlights that in other places, within higher education around the world, the practices are unstructured and not evolved towards the faculty or talent concerned.

According to Brewster, et al. (2008:128), talent management processes involve employee planning, talent-analysis gap, recruitment and selection, training and development, retention, talent reviews, succession planning, and evaluation. These authors agree that in order for an organisation to thrive in the face of increasing competition, all talent management processes should be aligned to the business strategies. Thunnissen et al. (2013:35), whose work is grounded on TM in higher education contexts, identifies the following as the main practices of talent management: recruitment, staffing and succession planning, training and development, and lastly retention management.

In this study, some the talent management practices like recruitment and selection, training and development, are discussed with focus and emphasis on retention management. Reward management has already been covered in the conceptual framework as one of the talent management practices. Stahl, Bjorkman, Farndale, Morris, Paauwe, Stiles, Trevor and Wright (2012:24) stress that in terms of retention, the organisation has to create and deliver a compelling value proposition, propose individualised career plans, institute market driven competitive compensation, and

ensure a strong balance between personal and professional goals as key elements of successful TM. A good TM programme focuses on an inventory of existing personnel and identification of future needs and retention measures, as well as maintenance of employee fidelity, not just involvement of leaders within the organisation.

Barkhuizen et al. (2014:117) attest to the same sentiment with the other authors that the most prominent practices of TM, that organisations like universities and government departments can engage in to help develop talent while maintaining a consistent brand identity across international education sector are: recruitment, staffing and succession planning, and training and development from an organisation's perspective. Stahl et al. (2012:32) suggest that talent management practices that have profound impact from an individual perspective are talent acquisition, talent review processing, staffing, talent retention practices and talent development. However, from literature, the above practices are generally poorly applied within universities worldwide due to lack of management commitment towards TM practices in general. This explains why only a few universities worldwide view their talent management as effective, as most leaders do not appear to be convinced that talent is an important resource worth investing in. Thus, most universities in developing countries are lagging behind in the implementation of talent management as a strategy for growth. Yet, as indicated in the next subsection, universities are increasingly operating in a competitive world where the mobility and turnover of highly skilled individuals is quite high.

2.7.1 Recruitment and selection of talent in Universities

Universities are operating in a global environment, which is highly competitive where management is faced with the challenge of recruitment and selection of talent, which highly influences mobility of talent. Brink et al. (2013:182) argue that academic recruitment and selection does not happen in a vacuum and there has to be considerations of differences between recruitment and selection practices of different academic subfields or disciplines. These authors observe that there is no prescribed recruitment and selection practices since each subfield or discipline has different features unique to its own particular structure. For example, the way the humanities and sciences departments recruit may not be the same because of the differences in

their career patterns and student composition. The job market of academics has gone international, hence universities like NUL have to be diverse in their recruitment and selection practices. Savanevicien and Vilciauskaite (2017:251) posit that during recruitment and selection of academics, there tends to be an over emphasis on research work at the expense of teaching experience, which results in academics focusing on the overproduction of research articles, creating an imbalance.

Literature shows that generally, organisations battle to attract and retain highly skilled employees. Talmaciu and Dugan (2013:324) assert that most companies are dealing with challenges in attracting job applicants and with a low retention rate, which are very important issues. The authors further allude that on an international scale, 82% of organisations are dealing with difficulties during recruitment, and 69% of them have retention issues. In North America, Europe and Asia, managers consider the failure to attract and retain the best employees as one of the top threat to economic competitiveness. Drawing from this, it shows that universities need to be creative in order to attract and retain talented academics. Chandrachud and Athavale (2015:2) say that in order to attract the best talent in academia, the universities have to devise strategies for top-level university research and interdisciplinary research, as well as strengthen the international researcher mobility.

According to Krishnan and Sonia (2015:304), the hiring of talent has become a major challenge for higher education institutions, yet a much bigger challenge is turnover, since a number of talented members switch organisations. The sudden loss of the knowledge pool affects existing academic plans of the organisation in a negative manner. This means institutions compete with each other to attract and retain the best available academic talent. Given the increasing competition for scarce skills, maximising the talent of individual employees is a unique source of competitive advantage for organisations, therefore, organisations should be able to identify who their most talented employees are and where they are located in the globe. However, as indicated by Watson (2010:5), many universities lack methodically entrenched, empirically established selection and promotion practices for highly talented academics. For example, at NUL, not all new academic recruits are interviewed even though reference checks are done. An interview helps the organisation to meet and interact with top-rated applicants and to clarify issues related to suitability of candidates for the job. Hence, interviews are an important part of recruitment, which

should not be skipped. Interviews could be used to establish person subject fit, organisational fit, creativity and innovativeness of a candidate, confirm their international experience, and their social competency and networks.

To forestall challenges in recruitment within universities, Dutch universities have adopted two recruitment methods, that is, open and closed recruitment. The disciplinary context affects, which recruitment process and criteria will be, adopted (Brewster, et al. 2008:326). Open recruitment is when vacant posts are advertised in newspapers, websites and email networks; and closed recruitment is when the posts are advertised internally and filled in by employees who are already part of the university establishment. Chandrachud and Athavale (2015:4) note that University of Cologne's strategy to attract the best talent includes the professionalization of recruitment and flexible staff appointment procedures which are open, quick and transparent, and done in conjunction with independent expert external reviewer. In addition, the university offers career support to academic managers to foster intercultural integration and assistance to researchers and their families. Tyagi, Singh and Aggarwal (2017:48), who posit that if an organisation intends to be an employer of choice for recruiting the best talent, it has to think carefully about what potential employees would consider before joining the organisation, support this idea. Most academics would consider organisational issues such as nurturing prospective employees' talents, provision of meaningful opportunities for professional growth, organisational growth/ stability and good reputation in the higher education sector. Depending on how an organisation addresses these issues and analyses every component of the recruiting process, this can enhance chances of the organisation recruiting the best talent who will offer their service for a long time.

2.7.2 Training and development

An important aspect that emerges from current literature on talent management is the value of sustained training and development of qualified employees. Wadesango (2016:112) reiterates Bourdieu's claim that sustained development of academic skills and competencies remains a critical strategy of improving the quality of graduate

outputs. He further laments that, universities necessity to develop and maintain effective academic development programmes in order to subject academics to a process of continuous professional and academic development. As a result, this will produce effective and quality educational programmes and graduates, and increase retention of the most sought after talent. While staff development programmes exist in universities to enable staff to advance their careers and qualifications, most universities have not achieved their localisation levels due to competition from other universities, private sector and parastatal organisations who keep creaming off the best employees.

According to Sanyal (1995:19), despite efforts by universities to make provision for staff development, if not properly managed, their efforts can be eroded by the migration rate of talented employees, training and development as a retention strategy can only reduce the rate of talent movement but not totally eradicate the problem. Poaching of talent is a challenge, mainly for universities with low autonomy, especially when they receive little or no budget for staff development from the government. To encourage junior lecturers to continue in career development, some universities have adopted publications and PHD qualification as a prerequisite for tenure and promotion.

According to Collings and Mellahi (2009:308), employees' knowledge, skills and capabilities need to be boosted and recognised as a vital source of competitive advantage. These authors have indicated that there are a number of benefits in investing in talent, and competitiveness is the main one. Talmaciu and Dugan (2013:323) are of the view that, since highly talented employees always migrate to environments where they continuously develop, an organisation with an active and vibrant TM strategy becomes more attractive because of such resources which gives it even more competitive in the end. Savaneviciene and Vilciauskaite (2017:246) posit that constant investment in talent development generates a loyal employee in most cases. For example, if a university gives academics an opportunity to go and further their studies, on completion one feels obliged to come and give back to the organisation instead of going to join another organisation. Which could be, however, easier for talent to leave if they have developed themselves with no help or support from the university, which happens in most cases at the NUL. Training and development of academics works as contingency in cases where a key position falls vacant. Internal talent from the organisation talent incubator can readily fill it.

Development of training programmes, which meet the needs of employees and are beneficial to employees develop a sense of appreciation and value to the employee, that leads to reluctance to quit the organisation and create loyalty. A good example of this is the case of some Germany universities as highlighted by Chandrachud and Athavale (2015:4). At the University of Cologne, scientists, inventors and new researchers are offered full support regarding their intellectual property rights. Further support for top academics and researchers is provided through opportunities for scholarships, enabling their families to join during the research stay in Germany, internationalisation of research, the development of a family friendly sponsorship portfolio under long period where there are marital partners. Children under 18 years are eligible for allowances and situations where work commitments can be interrupted or prolonged during childbearing breaks. The above mentioned strategies are more aligned with both the individual's personal and academic interests, and aim to meet the goal of the university of retaining the best talent by showing interest in the development of its highly talented employees.

An important issue foregrounded by the Germany case is how pivotal state or private support is to talent management within universities. In this case, the government as a stakeholder in the retention of talented employees, plays an imperative role by availing funds for sponsorship for further development of highly gifted academics. Chandrachud and Athavale (2015:5) note that there are deliberations at the national level to project Germany as the destination for the best researchers, and strengthen her position in the knowledge society. There is focus on international exchange and funding programs. This approach has enhanced the attractiveness and international competitiveness of the Germany higher education and research system.

In South Africa, a few universities have already started formal TM policies. According to Erasmus, Naidoo and Joubert, (2017:5), in an endeavour to retain the talented academic staff, UNISA in its talent management strategy, for individuals with high-level skills, scarcity and or excellence policy, acknowledges that retention of highly qualified talent is a problem escalating in higher education institutions, which needs to be addressed. It is imperative to develop competitive conditions of service and remuneration packages in order to retain services of talented personnel. UJ's talent management strategy for individuals with high level of skill and/or excellence states that, recruiting staff and retaining them in public education institutions has long been

a problem of escalating proportions. This is particularly in respect to those individuals who have high levels of scarce skills, competence, knowledge and the ability to perform at superior levels of excellence. This enables such individuals an opportunity for upward mobility in the labour market (both nationally and internationally) as institutions compete for such skills, competencies and knowledge. An institution would be dependent on their skills, abilities, and reputation to attain its strategic goals and enhance its stature. Thus, UNISA has recognised the need for a strategy to create a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining top talent for the institution. A range of policies and strategies exist to create incentives for top and scarce talent that allows the university to recruit and retain such individuals.

2.7.3 Talent management retention strategies

Retaining valued talent poses a major challenge to all organisations across fields and regions, and universities are no exception. Though there are no guaranteed solutions to retain talented academics, there can be suggestions on ways to alleviate the problem by assessing why talented employees are leaving the organisation voluntarily or involuntarily. As a result, retention of talented academic requires a multifaceted approach that is context based, as every work environment is different from the other.

Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam (2013:334) indicate the following as talent retention strategies: hygiene factors like benefits, compensation, location which has a direct effect on career success, and intrinsic rewards that indirectly assist to reduce talent loss. Hughes and Rogers (2008: 747) maintain that retention strategies should be in the following aspects; stimulation of passion, atmosphere of respect and trust, effective performance assessments with clear performance targets, right balance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational elements, and retirement benefits in order to achieve long-term success of organisation.

According to Tyagi, et al. (2017:50), apart from right selection, providing opportunities for development and growth, equitable and fair treatment of employees, performance bonus and accountability; communication came out as one of the major strategies used to retain talent. In the case of organisations like universities, communication should be done properly, especially in terms of policies and programmes that affect

talent such that no one feels left out. Bushe (2012:280) posits that university management has a prerogative to effectively communicate the vison and mission of the university to its employees in order to increase employee loyalty and trust. Open and continuous communication, where contributions and feedback from talent is valued, creates transparency and accountability from both management and employees.

Selesho and Nalie (2014:295) confirm that the shortage of academic staff and the failure to retain quality academic staff continue to be hindrances in the effective running of universities in knowledge formation and learning. This poses a challenge for universities to devise context- based retention strategies that cannot be imitated by other organisations. From the work of Bushe (2012:279), academic retention refers to the ability of a university to acquire and retain talented academics through the establishment of quality work life, conducive climate and committed design and implementation of best TM practices. Although completely eliminating employee migration is impossible, implementation of factors like competitive compensation plans, open paths for career development, creation of promotion opportunities, challenging work, and training and development spaces, can help to reduce talent exodus in universities. Netswera et al. (2005:36) allude to the idea that investing and sustaining constant commitment by compensating the best talent what they are worth is one of the major steps to retain best talent who are always comparing their inputs to their output and that of their counterparts in and outside the organisation. While competitive market driven compensation is essential for retaining and attracting talent, it cannot be the only success factor. It should be complemented by other job factors like recognition, tenure, long-term carer planning, and high degree of autonomy.

From the analysis done by Tyagi et al. (2017:50), indications are that incompetent academic leadership contributes to academic staff retention problems. The authors add the following, in order of rank, as main factors that, when properly administered, increase academic retention: job satisfaction and good leadership, market related salaries, academic development, promotion prospects, and job security. Hence, emphasis by management should not be extrinsic while underestimating the motivation occasioned by intrinsic job features and other benefits like growth and learning opportunities, pension, and strong working relationships which are valued by talented employees. Offering talented employees long-term career development

opportunities, coupled with balanced personal and professional lives, binds employees emotionally, and creates loyalty to the organisation.

According to Bradley (2016:15), the core activities that are undertaken by a university are teaching and research, with the quality of the latter separating the top universities from their competitors. He points out that research activities are critical to the ranking and reputation of the universities. This necessitates retention strategies of pivotal talent with significant contribution in both teaching and research. Having talented academics who can supervise and mentor postgraduate students like doctoral and post-doctoral students increases the university research output, generates research income, and enhances training and development of other staff members as well as students. Tygai et al. (2017:49) suggest that one of the key retention strategy for talent is to apply financial and non-financial support to researchers, as they are primary drivers of global university rankings. The brand image of the university to the outside world matters to talented academics, as they want to be associated with organisations with a reputation. Research brings challenge to talent as they aspire to have world – class research reputation and be awarded research grants, increasing income for both the university and themselves. For talented academics, their research work, publications, peer reviews and citation count are bases for performance appraisal and promotion in their career life, hence universities should create a balance for talent between teaching and research. Drew, Ehrich and Hansford (2008:13) highlight that as a retention strategy, university management should develop formal management training, experiential learning, and mentoring opportunities for talented employees to develop their management and leadership skills as academics and to concentrate on improving competencies in their fields of speciality. Growth and advancement opportunities through clearly defined promotional guidelines, which are perceived to be fair and just puts an organisation in a strategic position to retain talented academics.

Krishnan and Sonia (2015:304) are of the opinion that effective recruitment is the starting point of effective retention. Effective recruitment entails identifying key positions and the turnover risks associated with those positions, as well as competence or behavioural-based selection criteria that support the retention strategy and business drivers. Universities use succession and leadership programmes to fill positions using internal recruitment, instead of offering crucial positions to external recruits as a retention strategy. In order to retain talented employees, they must have

full acknowledgement of their growth and promotions. Universities need to motivate and reward academics with pay for performance or with pay that is commensurate to their cultural and symbolic capital. As a return for their scholastic investment, talent expect payment of high incomes. Outstanding performance or research work should be recognised through salary and as appropriate through opportunities for leadership or for initiatives of special interest of the talent and the university. Flexibility to accommodate and balance the needs of family and work contribute to productivity, satisfaction and retention. Recognition of the need for talent to acquire new experiences to enrich their teaching and provision of research projects and writing, and sabbatical leaves to enhance their social capital, should be availed. In situations where spouses of talented employees are working in a different town or city, as a retention strategy, it is important to create opportunities for spouses to come and work or waiver fees for them to study at the universities. This will reduce chances of talented employees leaving and looking for opportunities that can accommodate their family needs. Theron, Barkhuizen and Du Plessis (2014:1) suggest that universities can adopt competitive compensation attached to bonus structure reflecting talent contribution and performance management, emotional recognition and opportunities for mentorship and career development.

A proactive approach is critical in order to curb talent mobility. Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam (2013:332) suggest that it is imperative to include talent in decision-making processes, which affect their work as it creates a sense of involvement. This, coupled with effective communication of policies and initiatives, develops a sense of importance to talented academic. Management has to maximise individual skills and abilities by aligning individual career objectives and goals to the organisational strategy in an effort to increase the talent's sense of worth in the organisation. Brink et al. (2013:182) argue that management should not be focused at efficiency in planning and coordinating efforts towards achieving organisational goals at the expense of the individual talent's needs and preferences. For PhD holders, professors and associate professors, challenging work brings satisfaction and relevance to their work, and is, therefore, imperative. Teaching and supervision of postgraduate degrees gives them a sense of accomplishment and reputation as some of the postgraduate qualifications are examined internationally.

According to Nenty and Biao (2013:10), no claims of professorship can be made without substantial creation of new knowledge and utilising that knowledge to contribute practical solutions to society. Universities that give their talented employees platform to initiate research- supported programme reforms and initiatives, which extend outside and beyond the lecture room, have high chances of retaining such academics. Talent should be given opportunity to take a proactive role in their own development, and should not be left to pay for their own development.

For retention to be effective there should be a clear alignment between the university's strategy, core activities of teaching and research, and how talented academics are recruited, developed, rewarded and retained. Lack of alignment leads to organisations failing to achieve their stated objectives and talent leaving for better opportunities. Tithe (2010:11) highlights that, while retention strategies across different occupation groups and industries have many common features, such as competitive pay, good working environment, and progressive human resource policies that offer opportunities for advancement, they need to be context-specific and evidence based to be more effective. An understanding of the specific needs of highly gifted academics will assist the universities in employing targeted retention strategies that meet the specific needs for that exclusive group who give the organisation a competitive advantage and a reputation in the education field. Recognition, clear communication, quality feedback, and tangible and non-tangible rewards act as key components for retaining the talented academics. Tygai et al. (2017:50) emphasise that communication of programmes, policies and vision of the university should be done properly so that no one feels left out.

Rudhumbu (2014:90-91), concurring with other authors, identifies retention strategies like purposeful hiring, clear succession plans mapping internal talent against future needs, adjusting compensation based on market conditions, effective communication and ensuring a culture of information sharing, developing skills internally, and building collaborative teams.

Drawing from the above, a purposeful approach to talent management in universities should be a priority for competitiveness. Savaneviciene and Vilciauskaite (2017:256) say talent management conversations and discourses should have a focus on collaboration and input of all stakeholders, namely; government, university

management, society and talented academics. A deliberate concentration of talent management should be on talent retention since talent is the actual driving force in the success of any university. Consequently, talent management principles, especially retention strategies, should aim to minimise risk and ripple effects of unpredicted turnover of talent by providing targeted strategies in order to improve the return on investment at the same time balancing employee-employer interests.

Below is a summary of some of the key retention strategies that enable universities to increase the retention rate.
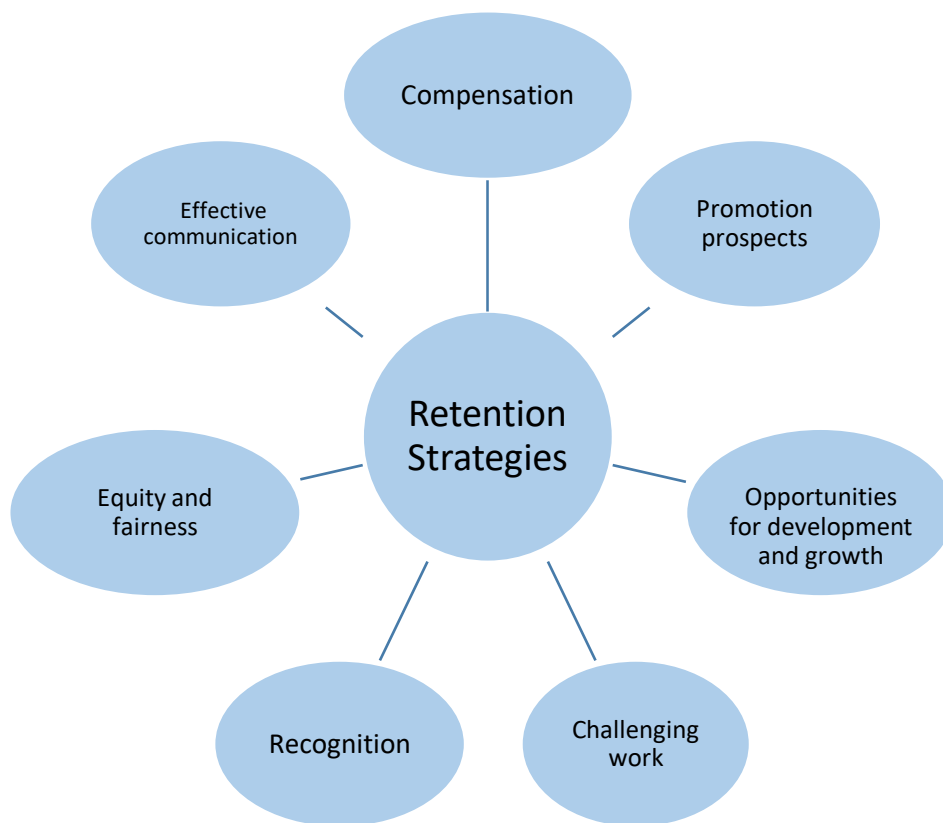

Figure 7: *summary of some the retention strategies*

2.8 THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY FUNDING AND AUTONOMY IN TALENT MANAGEMENT

Funding of higher education, specifically universities, is a critical issue which allows universities to achieve the triple mandate of teaching, research and community engagement. According to Mgaiwa (2018:1), African state funded universities have

suffered an acute cut from government budgets in recent years and NUL is no exception. This has been because of inadequate government subventions and unsustainable financing sources and mechanisms for financing universities. Panigrahi (2018:62) highlights that in India, financing of universities has gradually decreased because of competing demands from other government departments like the health sector, and this calls for universities to explore alternative and innovative methods of financing their operations. With limited government subvention, universities are affected in the following operations areas; quality of educational programmes, research output, training and development, recruitment and selection, as well as retention of academics. These funding challenges faced by universities can hinder universities from achieving their vision, mission, and these results in deteriorating quality of education programmes.

Mgaiwa (2018:1) notes that, in Tanzania and Kenya universities, unless funding mechanisms change from the current reliance on government funding, achievement of universities educational and research goals may not be achieved. Wangenge-Ouma, Cloete and Cloete (2008:906) highlight that in South Africa, public funding for universities has been declining and opportunities for other streams of funding remain limited. These authors further note that, in order to mitigate the inadequate funding from government, universities raise tuition fees for public universities despite resistance from both the government and students. According to Schiller and Brimble (2009:85), in Thailand, the government has introduced reforms to stimulate university-cooperation as one of the means to obtain additional income for university. Bush (2007:443) advises governments to grant greater autonomy to universities bound with obligations that set limits on the nature and levels of discretion available for alternative ways of raising funding to supplement government subventions. It then implies that, when a high degree of autonomy has been granted to a university, there should be increased accountability and transparency of how resources are sourced, allocated, distributed and utilised. In the case of state universities, it calls for the government to give considerable degree of autonomy to universities to make decisions concerning financial issues to better engage alternative funding sources outside of the government. Kabir (2010:619) concurs that, when higher degree of autonomy is granted to universities, the main concern becomes the problems of compliance and control of resources, and the role of government in universities has to be redefined.

The author adds that critics of university low autonomy argue that the government interferes in university affairs causing restrictions in academic and intellectual freedom and creativity. In state funded universities like NUL, greater autonomy ensure the cultivation of knowledge using innovative funding mechanisms.

Panigrahi (2018:69) recommends mobilisation of resources to complement existing government funds in order to increase financial freedom and sustainability to African universities. This can be done through the following alternative innovative methods: encouraging fundraising through philanthropy, alumni and foreign university participation. The author adds that one of the ways is to encourage the corporate to participate in university programmes, especially research, to further the market participation in order to improve efficiency and autonomy. These alternative methods of funding can target specific research areas. For example, collaborations between a university and the source could target funding of specific research areas under community engagement to solve community problems.

Mgaiwa (2018:3) highlight that, since enrolment of students in African universities has increased, if universities are granted autonomy to charge economic fees, it could be another avenue for universities to raise more income. Kabir (2010:625) suggests that, apart from increase in tuition fees as an internal source of funds, governments could increase access to student loans and participation of social organisations, as well as open doors for donors to support universities financially or in improving infrastructure. However, increasing tuition fees will lessen the financial burden on the government but shift the burden to the parents and students. The financing from donors and charity organisations may have the challenge of not being dependable and unsustainable as it is influenced by the economic state of the donor or the charity organisation. Panigrahi (2018:71) suggests that universities could engage in various relevant consultancy projects with the government and private sector and introduce short courses and programmes to generate income without jeopardising the core academic activities. According to Badat (2010:16), due to limited resources, government and universities need to devise new ways of funding to ensure high quality academic development initiatives, to enhance equity of opportunity, and production and retention of talented academics. Inhibition of greater autonomy could result in more loss of talented academics and deterioration of working conditions.

2.9 HIGH MOBILITY IN UNIVERSITIES

Failure by universities to retain talented academics has detrimental effects on all the stakeholders; the organisation, the remaining staff or workforce, the students and the society as a whole. Dented reputation of the organisation reduces its ability to attract the best quality staff, while the quality of teaching and workload for the remaining academic staff is affected, causing students to receive poor quality education. As a result, the university is not able to meet the needs and solve the socio-economic problems of society. Selesho and Naile (2014:295) observe that high turnover can cause stakeholders to mistrust the system and affect the quality, and reputation of the organisation. Nenty and Biao (2013:1) opine that the ranking of world universities is especially driven by the quality of their professors. From the analysis done by Selesho and Naile (2014:300), incompetent academic leadership is credited to academic staff retention problems occasioned by failure to detect the needs and preferences of talented academics. Tyagi et al. (2017:49) assert that job insecurity, inadequate reward, and recognition and even limited resources for academics to effectively carry out their work can aggravate retention problems. These authors note that poor management practices, coupled with work overload and poor research funding, potentially push talent to quit the organisation.

Samuel and Chipunza (2013:100) emphasise that employee retention is a major challenge organisations are facing because high demand for high level talent nationally and globally. Academics who are highly qualified and who have specialised skills consider the cost of investment in their education and keep changing universities looking for return for their investment and opportunities for career growth. For example, professors are high ranking in society and they seek organisations whose compensation is commensurate to their status and level of knowledge. Academics who have both job fit and organisation fit are likely to stay longer if they get recognition for their outstanding contributions.

According to Netswera, et al. (2005:36), efforts to retain employees in most organisations target mainly employees with core competencies and the retention strategies differ from one institution to another. It is a challenge to organisations to keep up to date with the expectations of the incoming and current talent and to keep abreast with other outside organisations' strategies in an effort to retain the best

employees. Universities compete with other private and public entities for good academics and researchers, and trends show that universities continue to lose out to other players. According to Sanyal (1995:17), deteriorating working conditions in universities have caused a significant number of academic staff to go and work as cabinet ministers and directors, and technical advisors in government departments, which has posed a challenge to universities to retain the best talent and National University of Lesotho is no exception.

The global world of work is fast changing and there are many variable forces at play, which account for the escalating mobility of highly talented employees. Swanepoel et al. (2008:15) view the movement of highly gifted employees out of the organisation as talent diffusion. The authors highlight numerous factors beyond the control of the organisation that lead to talent exodus. However, when talented people leave the organisation it should be viewed as a process of the organisation diffusing talent back into society, in the form of people who are better groomed and equipped to add value to elsewhere compared to prior their joining the organisation. While some organisations are sceptical on investing in employees through training and development for fear of losing them later, talent diffusion applauds turnover as sending back people who are empowered back to the world to go and add value for either the government departments or other organisations in the network of value.

Armstrong (2009:497) explains turnover (labour turnover, attrition) as the rate at which people leave an organisation whether voluntarily or involuntarily. Turnover of talented employees can be disruptive and costly, so it is imperative for the organisation to measure the turnover and calculate the costs for future planning and to identify the reasons why people are leaving to avoid negative impact on the organisation. For example, in a university, if a professor leaves the organisation, it has immense bearing on the teaching and learning of higher degrees and supervision of higher degree students. Bradely (2016:17) posit that turnover has direct costs in recruitment (advertising, interviewing, induction, and training of replacements and opportunity cost of time), loss of expertise which may not be easily replaced, and loss of output or production waiting for replacement. While in most cases turnover is seen as dysfunctional, especially when key talented employees leave, it can also be functional when new members join the organisation and bring with them new experiences and ideas from their previous work experiences.

The haemorrhage of talent could be a result of many factors. For example, as highlighted in the NUL Strategic Plan (2017-2020: 5), NUL has very few postgraduate programmes that most highly talented academics may not find challenging enough. Most doctors and professors would prefer to be more engaged in teaching and supervising masters and doctoral students than in teaching undergraduate programmes. Research output is highly regarded in the academic arena.

Theron, Barkhuizen and Du Plesssis (2014:14) note that when academics have heavy teaching loads, it adversely bears on their research output, which will influence their decision to stay or leave the organisation. At NUL, for example, the exodus of highly qualified academics as highlighted in the strategic plan as exacerbated by lack of research financial support, inadequate infrastructure like laboratory facilities and equipment, lack of internet bandwidth required for collaboration across national boundaries, and limited access to global knowledge resources. From literature, low levels of teamwork and professionalism coupled with inadequate incentives and recognition of achievement are some of the main factors that can cause highly gifted employees to be poached by other organisations (Savaneviciene and Vilciauskaite, 2017:246).

2.10. CHALLENGES OF STAFF RETENTION

This section highlights some of the key challenges that that affect retention in universities. Focus is on the following challenges and how each affects retention: university funding and autonomy, lack of national / local staff, retirement age, and lack or non-existence of university talent management programmes.

2.10.1 Lack of national staff

Sanyal (1995:15) highlights that staff management in universities has been made complex, especially in Africa, by the need to phase out expatriate staff who are expensive and often employed on short-term basis. The author further notes that the shortage of national staff in certain critical disciplines (science and technology) and

top management positions, however, raises the demand for expatriate staff. Mashinini (2019:70) indicates that there seems to be bias at NUL where expatriates are appointed to senior positions based on the assumption that there is lack of local talent. This was evident in African countries like Zimbabwe in the early 1980s soon after independence but some of the countries have managed to overcome the problem (Mushonga 2011:85). However, some countries like Lesotho, are still trying to deal with the problem. According to Robny and Du Preeze (2013:3), the change in the demography of university staff in terms of age and qualification is a major challenge in universities as most national staff is young and certain universities are experiencing a decrease in proportion of senior and experienced employees. Sanyal (1995:15) notes that in Zambia, a great percentage of academics start at lecturer grade and the proportion at the two highest grades (professor and associate professor) has decreased to 10% from a quarter since 1987. The author further elaborates that, in Kenya there is a rapid expansion of universities which has left the universities without adequate numbers of senior administrators and teaching staff. In Nigeria, universities have few academics at professor level, below the officially prescribed 20 per cent. Buttiens and Hondeghem (2012:1) concur with the above sentiments that there is a shortage of senior level academics (doctorates and professors) in universities and disproportionately large number of junior academics. These authors refer to it as the demographic evolution on the labour market.

2.10.2 Retirement age

Robny and Du Preeze (2013:3) highlight that one major factor that causes the pyramid of academic in universities to be too broad at the base could be the retirement age. Some universities have 55-60 years as the retirement age which means they lose the best talent when they are at the climax of their careers where they can offer the best service to the universities through the teaching and research experience accrued over years. In other instances, freezing of posts when senior employees leave the organisation has caused some universities to recruit young graduates at half the salary of the employee who has left as a cost cutting measure, even though that has an impact on the quality of teaching. Brewster et al. (2008:129) comments that retirement concept and post 50 age group needs to be re-examined and policies developed to

attract and retain multi –generational employees. While it is debatable, 70 years could be a retirement age for academics who are in the professorship band as a way of retaining the best-seasoned and experienced employees.

2.10.3 Lack of higher education formal talent management programs

Krishnan and Sonia (2015:304) highlight that at present, there is a lack of talent management activity in higher education as TM is still in its infancy in the education sector. Theron et al. (2014:3), who say, support this, historically higher education has been slow to adopt many corporate management processes. If shareholders are asking presidents and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of private corporations to implement formal talent management strategies to help ensure a prosperous future, why is not the same being asked of the leaders in higher education from its trustees or regents? This then raises the question if the challenges of TM implementation in universities. According to Krishnan and Sonia (2015:306), hiring talent has become a major challenge for higher education institutions, yet a much bigger challenge is that of retention since a number of members switch organisations. Hence, universities need to move away from their current transactional human resources systems and critically re-examine organisational and managerial structures from a talent management perspective (Drew et al., 2008:9).

According to Watson (2010:7), one other strategy that assists universities to excel in talent management implementation is to ensure internal consistence, complementarity, and reinforcement of the practices they employ to attract, select, develop, evaluate and retain talent. This is internal fit. Internal fit in this text is used to mean a focus on how organisational policies, principles, and HRM systems are linked within the organisation in order to give the organisation competitive advantage.

Stahl et al. (2012:26) highlights that talent management practices should align with the organisational culture, that is, have cultural fit and be entirely linked to the business strategy and long-term goals of the organisation, that is, strategic fit. In the case of National University of Lesotho, their long-term goal is to be the leading university in Africa; hence, their talent management practices should align to that goal. Armstrong (2009:61) further posits that a high degree of internal, cultural and strategic fit creates

an inimitable system of practices and not only drives excellence in talent management that contributes to organisation learning and knowledge management. Competitive advantage is achieved if universities ensure the main elements of TM are aligned internally, externally and globally to support their business strategy, which is the mission and vision. In the NUL National Strategic Plan (2015-2020), the mission of the university is to promote national advancement through innovative teaching, learning, research and professional services, to produce high calibre and responsible graduates able to serve their communities with diligence. In order to achieve the mission, talent management should be embraced and be aligned with other policies such as promotional policies and career development framework to assist retention of talent, which is a major source of competitive advantage.

2.11 LIMITATIONS OF TALENT MANAGEMENT

The following limitations of talent management in universities will be discussed: over emphasis on the best talent at the exclusion of other employees, exclusion of other work aspects, lack of theoretical foundation, and over emphasis on managerial views at the expense of talent's opinions on how effective talent management could be implemented.

2.11.1 Over emphasis on best talent

According to Thunnissen (2015:39), talent management has a number of limitations in its approach to management of talent in organisations, such as the over-emphasis on the best talent at the exclusion of average and non-talented employees. This can cause diminishing employee well-being and less job satisfaction in the long term. Furthermore, TM practices and activities tend to lean on one side, emphasising a limited range of practices and activities such as attraction, development and retention of talent without paying attention to other issues like discharge and turnover. In this view, one can argue that the issues of discharge and turnover should also be part of TM since there are also benefits that can be found in turnover such as the provision of new people with new and fresh ideas coming to join the organisation.

Somaya and Williamson (2011:75) support the idea that it is naive to assume that talented employees will not leave the organisation even if the best talent management practices are put in place, hence TM should emphasise the need to keep and maintain relationships with the employees who have even left the organisation as part of social capital. Panigrahi (2018:74) observe that organisations have to battle for talent but realise that it is impossible to completely curb talent mobility despite all efforts in talent management activities and practices. The author advocates it is imperative to maintain relationships with outgoing talent in order to increase the social capital of the organisation. For example, their previous employers could still use the departed talent as external examiners or moderators for academic programmes and examinations.

2.11.2 Exclusion of other work aspects

From literature, Collings and Mellahi (2009:309) note the limitation that TM practices tend to focus more on the relevance of employment practices and neglect the other work aspects like work design, job rotation, employee engagement, employee commitment and job resources which are useful instruments. When adopted by management, talent management tends to focus more on the management unit rather than on spreading the TM practices and activities to the whole organisation. Bradley (2016:19) affirms that TM practices and activities mainly focus on the strategic fit and yet it should encompass the internal fit and organisational fit adjusting to the internal and external context of the organisation. The author indicates that talent management has another short coming of focusing on a single aspect of the environment which is the labour market, unlike in the human resource theories which make a clear distinction between the product-market-technology dimension (competitive mechanisms) and the social-cultural–legal dimension (institutional mechanisms). Hence, TM should not over emphasise the value of human capital or best talent and neglect other systems and resources that can offer the organisation a competitive advantage and improve its productivity. Talent management has been criticised by Buttien and Hondeghem (2012:5) for dividing employees into two groups; the core employees who have higher value placed on them due to the uniqueness of their skills and who constitute the symbolic capital of the organisation, and the rest who are treated as peripheral employees. This implies that the peripheral employees will not

be seriously considered in the talent management practices implementation. They further allude that TM should engage a balanced approach to all employees in order for it to achieve a sustained competitive advantage.

2.11.3 Lack of theoretical foundation

Collings and Mellahi (2009:306) posit that talent management lacks a stable theoretical foundation and TM literature has been conceptual and is worsened by the lack of empirical evidence on the conceptual models and ideas. Thunnissen (2015:8) argues that current TM literature reveals a biased view on talent and talent management, and that in most publications on TM, the organisations' perspective is emphasised over the perspective of employees and other stakeholders. Empirical research informing such literature has been focusing mainly on top management as the research population that produced such a bias (Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam, 2013:330). Thus, even though talent or talented employees are central subjects in talent management, there is little research interest in their experiences and opinions. This research sought to investigate the opinions and experiences of the talented employees.

2.11.4 Over-emphasis on managerial views

Brink et al.'s (2013: 186) work on gaps in TM literature, one of the main weaknesses noted was that talent management literature has a managerial one-dimensional orientation, where it is always portrayed as a tool to maximise high performance only. Secondly, most of the available literature is derived from the US and the corporate world, and is not representative of the wider geographic diversities. It has also been observed that the dominant viewpoint in talent management is unitaristic, which is emphasising the role of top managers and a top-to-bottom approach. In such frameworks, divergent opinions on the differentiated competencies are rarely taken into account, and there is marginalisation of those who are perceived as non-talented.

Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramanian (2013:336) says besides the managerialistic and unitaristic view, the mainstream approach to TM practices is one sided because literature on talent management only emphasises a limited range of practices and activities, paying attention only to attraction, development and retention of talents. This one sided trajectory emphasises employment practices and neglects practices beyond the management of people. These include work practices like work design and emotional engagement which are essential elements for retention.

This study aims to understand the shortcomings identified above using empirical evidence from a small university, where the main focus or the research population is the talented individuals, rather than university management only. Instead of just focusing on the value of TM for organisations (universities), this study foregrounds the value of talent management from the perspective of the employee- talent perspective. Focus on TM in the context of a university as NUL should be from both an organisational and employees' perspective. Further to analysing NUL's organisational policies on TM, the study puts emphasis on investigating and foregrounding the value of TM to the talented academics in the university. This fills the empirical gap, but also affords a "view from below" on a subject matter that has been dominated by top-level management and consultant's perspectives. It also fills the gap in perspectives from a largely under-represented sector in literature on talent management, that is, higher education in Southern Africa. The study takes a more balanced and pluralist view, acknowledging a multiplicity of players in talent management by highlighting and foregrounding, not only the challenges, but also the goals and perceptions of other stakeholders on the phenomenon. The conclusions from such a study will increase new knowledge to the area of talent management generally and specifically, as well as influence policy in higher education institutions in the region.

2.9. CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of the current literature on talent and talent management, highlighting the trends and processes involved. It highlighted the fact that TM has developed in the corporate sector well but there is dearth of academic writings on it, while there is even less writing on the application of talent management

in universities. Most of the literature and empirical studies that exist is from Europe and the USA. The chapter also gave an overview of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks employed in this study, as well as short descriptions of the background of universities in Southern Africa, and that of the specific case study; the National University of Lesotho. This is the only state university in a country within South Africa, a fact that places it at a disadvantaged position in terms of talent recruitment and retention. The next chapter builds on this background to describe how data was collected from the targeted population to establish best practice in retention of talented employees from a multiple perspective of stakeholders.

CHAPTER 3:

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a detailed outline of the research design of the empirical study to unearth the considerations of talent management in retaining talented academics in universities. The chapter discusses the methodology and research method used in the study. It presents a detailed explanation of the research design, participant selection, data generation, data analysis, findings reporting and interpretation of the empirical data. Importantly for this study, I provide a detailed discussion of ethical considerations made, and research trustworthiness and credibility. In order to comprehend the talent management in universities, I employ semi-structured interviews and document analysis to generate empirical data.

3.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

According to Merriam (2009:5), qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they create their realities, and what meaning they construct from their experiences. In this study, I made use of qualitative research and interviews with different types of participants in an attempt to obtain their meanings, interpretations and feelings about the application of talent management practices in retention of talented academics in universities. Gibbs (2007:x) notes that qualitative research seeks to understand, describe and clarify social issues in various ways. The researcher plays an important role in the research process as they bring their own experiences in the field to strengthen particular ways of knowing. Thunnissen et al. (2013:101) note that a qualitative study provides insight into important variables and theoretical foundations when an academic field or topic is under-explored or lacks clear models and definitions, as in the case of the field of talent management at NUL. In this study, my role was to give opportunity to talented academics and university management to voice their views on issues of talent management and how their understanding influences perceptions on retention.

This qualitative study employs an interpretive paradigm to identify talent management practices meant to retain talented academics at NUL in order to give the university competitive advantage. In this regard, the NUL academics and management were interviewed to offer their views in order to provide answers to the research questions in this study. Meriam (2009:36) advocates "…critical qualitative research uncovers, examines and critiques the social, cultural and psychological assumptions that structure and limit our ways of thinking and being in the world". In a university system where the goal is to challenge practices and better the system, understanding the context in which the academics and management at NUL operate has a bearing on the actions of both academics and management towards issues of retention.

In this study, the qualitative study employed an interpretive approach to develop a shared understanding of the reality that is created together by the researcher and the participants (Okeke & Van Wyk, 2015:60). The interpretive approach is based on the notion that data and facts about a phenomenon on their own are meaningless and requires interpretation. Therefore, in this instance, interpretive study seeks to reach the depth of participants' perceptions of talent management in their university context. Interviews sourced the participants exact meaning on talent management and retention. As suggested by Bryman and Bell (2011:617), data from documents and interviews (findings) enable description of multiple realities, to establish meanings and comprehend phenomenon and contextual relevance of the study.

Denzil and Lincoln (2011:2) note that qualitative study is used to collect in-depth information when using case studies. These authors explain that case study is more appropriate to gain insight into the important variables and theoretical foundations when an academic field or topic is under-explored or lacks clear models and definitions, as is the case in the field of talent management. Merriam (2009:5) maintains that qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they create their realities, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences. A case study approach was used employing semi-structured interviews, with different categories of participants in order to obtain their meanings, interpretations and feelings about the application of talent management practices in order to retain talented academics.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study focuses on the National University of Lesotho as a case study. The reasons for the selection of the National University of Lesotho were that it is the only state owned university in Lesotho and is the main producer of the workforce for the economy of this nation. The research design was based on the basic principle that in this study I focus on talent management policies in order to retain talented academic staff. Creswell (2007:102) defines a case study as a case within a real life, contemporary context or setting, which may be an object of study or a product of inquiry. Blanche and Durrheim (1999: 255) see a case study as being descriptive in nature and providing rich information about individuals or particular situations. A case study of National University of Lesotho will provide in-depth understanding of how talent management in universities can be used to give institutions of higher learning a competitive advantage by retaining academics of high calibre.

Creswell (2007:102) defines a case study as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real –life, contemporary bounded system (a case) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio-visuals, material and documents and reports). In this study, I chose case study as a research design because of its suitability to the study. As cited by Blanche and Durrheim (1999:255) and Creswell (2007:102), qualitative case study presents an in-depth understanding of phenomenon through generation of data from multiple sources such as interviews, documents and reports. I used crystallisation of data from multiple stakeholders through interviews and document analysis of NUL's policy documents to understand the practices of talent management in universities.

With regard to credibility, Nieuwenhuis (2016:121) points to triangulation as requisite, which is an understanding that people have multi-realities in their minds. He also discusses crystallisation – the crystallised reality is credible as far as those reading their data and analysis are able to see the same emerging patterns, and this adds to the trustworthiness of their research. Case study allows new ideas and hypotheses to emerge from both management and talented academics, and I used it to promote critical reflection on existing theories of academic retention. This case study allowed me to understand academic retention in depth. The use of documents and audio tapes

gives case study approach an advantage to provide data that can be reanalysed by other researchers and produces new assertions even after this study.

Blanche and Durrheim (1999:255) highlight that a case study approach has a problem with validity of information because causal links are difficult to test and generalisation cannot be made from a single case study. Alluded by Leedy and Ormrod (2013:141), is the similar weakness that since I am using only a single case of NUL, I cannot be sure that the findings are generalizable to other universities as each university is unique and my selection of participants is small.

3.3 PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY

3.3.1 Selection of participants

In the literature review chapter, I highlighted that the needs and preferences of multi stakeholders in universities are important, and affect talent management policies and practice. The population for this study were all lecturers and management at NUL, and all academics who had left the university in the past decade. According to the university statistics (National strategic Plan 2015-2020), the total number of academic staff was 374, with 128 PhD holders, 17 associate professors and 13 full professors. The key stakeholders identified were; the organisation represented by management, the employees and the society. According to Thunnissen et al. (2013:101), up until now the human resource management (HRM) advisors and management, as representatives of the organisation, have been the commonly targeted research population in talent management literature and research. To gain insight into the needs and preferences of multiple stakeholders, both representatives of the organisation and talented employees participated in the study.

A non-probability purposive sampling method was used to select respondents for the study. A purposive sampling method is suitable to situations where only some members of the population hold the information; in this case, management and talented academics hold the information. Selection of participants was based on the criteria that I used to define "Talent", which is highly intellectual employees with extraordinary skills and capabilities and with invention skills which gave the university

a competitive advantage. Regarding the academic staff, primary focus was on academics with PhDs, professors and associate professors, regardless of their ages, gender or when they started their career. According to Brink et al. (2013:184), many universities have specific human resource policies for their academic staff and additionally for support staff. In the case of this study, the focus was particularly on talented academic staff. The study included sixteen (16) interviewees with management representation, academics who were still at the university, and those who had already left the organisation. I interviewed three (3) members representing management, one from human resources and two management representatives. These participants were carefully chosen based on their current involvement in talent management practices, recruitment and selection, promotion procedures and compensation policies, and level of experience they had in these practices.

According to literature, most research on talent management has targeted management and excluded the talented academics. Sixteen (16) talented employees participated in this research on their needs and preferences regarding their retention. As indicated by Enders, De Boer, File, Jongbloed and Westerheijden (2011:2), the quality of education programs and university research, university's reputation, and the knowledge condition in a region, depends on the presence of highly qualified academic staff. Talented employees drive NUL to become more efficient, entrepreneurial and competitive by producing useful knowledge and relevant teaching necessary to solve societal and economic issues in Lesotho as a nation. Hence, it is imperative to give them an opportunity to express their views if the university is to fully utilise their skills and capabilities to achieve its objective of retaining talent. I interviewed eleven (11) talented academics who are professors, associate professors and PhD holders still at NUL, to get their views on how talent management practices were implemented to encourage them to stay with the organisation. Of the eleven academics, three were servicing their notices and quitting the organisation at the end of 2019. I interviewed two talented academics (professor and associate professor) who had left the university and joined other universities. This helped me to gain understanding of how academics define talent and view talent management practices at the NUL. The selection was based on the willingness to participate since the participation was be voluntary. My research assistant being a part-time employee at NUL assisted in identifying the participants who were at the university and those who were exiting the organisation.

One participant in the management team helped in identifying and recruiting participants who had left NUL as he had their contact details. Appointments for the interviews were done by email and telephones. Interviews for all the academics who were at NUL were contacted at the premise during office hours. Each interview lasted for an average of thirty-five minutes.

Literature shows that purposive sampling is suitable in avoiding some informants who may provide unreliable data voluntarily or involuntarily because they are keen to please the interviewer, may have hidden agendas and intentions and have their own emotional issues, principles, and viewpoints. Some respondents may be reliable and willing to provide truthful information, but they may not necessarily be competent enough to provide accurate information. This could be a major concern for a study of this nature where political viewpoints and affiliations of some respondents may influence their responses. To counter this, Tongco (2007:154-155) recommends that researchers should know how to ask the appropriate questions that draw out the information being sought, and respondents should be carefully selected to ensure their competency about the subject being researched.

3.4 DATA GENERATION STRATEGY

In order to fill in the gaps or blanks in the literature study, interviews and document analysis were used as the main instruments for data generation. Data was generated through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Documents analysed were such as vice chancellors' reports, NUL strategic plans as well as recruitment and promotion policies in order to gain insight into past and present talent management practices which can be used to increase talent retention. Data was gathered at the organisational level and the employee level in order to gain a multi-perspective of key stakeholders' views on talent management practices and policies at the university.

3.4.1 Interviews

Lichtman (2013:205) highlights that qualitative interviews open new insights to learn what participants think or feel about a phenomenon. This requires the interviewer to

be a good listener who is attentive to the details in the respondents' words and expressions. Qualitative data was generated through semi-structured interviews from the participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with those who were exiting the organisation (serving notices) and from with management represented by the HR department. As Blanche and Durrheim (1999:128) indicate, interviews present an opportunity to understand academics' perceptions of talent management. The interviews intended to gather qualitative data on the definition of talent and talent management, available talent management practices and identify any impediments on the implementation of talent management in order to increase retention at NUL.

All the interviews were semi-structured interviews scheduled with individual participants. According to Flick (2007:112), semi- structured interviews with a number of questions are prepared to cover the proposed scope of the interview. This data generation method was chosen based on Punch's (2005:168) posit that semi-structured interviews are a powerful means of probing for more information to gain understanding of people's own perceptions, meanings, and definitions of situations and constructions of reality. I used the interviews to understand the specific distinctions within a frame or between the frames of talent management. Duration of the interviews was around forty-five minutes with most of the participants, but in circumstances where I felt I needed to gather more information, negotiations to extend the time were done. Semi structured interviews were used with questions tailored to suit the different participant categories so as to get clarity and probe for more information on TM and retention strategies from different perspectives. Semi structured interviews were employed for all the categories, with face to face interviews being done with academics who were still at NUL and the management of the university, while telephone interviews were only done for academics who had already left the university. I developed an interview schedule with a list of prepared questions in advance from the research questions. My interview schedule had three types of questions, the main questions, follow-up questions, and probes.

Blanche and Durrkheim (1999:281) concur on the advantages of using personal interviews like face-to-face and telephone for derivation of in-depth information, and for probing more information from participants. Personal interviews yield the highest response rate as highlighted by Leedy and Ormrod (2013:190). I established a rapport and cooperation with my interviewees in establishing the impact of TM in the retention

of talented academics. Since most of the participants resided in Lesotho and were easily accessible, face-to-face interview was mainly used and telephone interview was used for those who had left NUL and the country and for whom there was no easy access. As suggested by Bryman and Bell (2011:479), because of the cost that came with telephone interviews, for one of the interviews I switched to Skype which was cheaper and had the advantage of video calling. This was after prior arrangements were made to ensure the interviewee had set aside adequate time for the interview.

I designed three (3) different interview guides for each category with 12-15 sub-questions derived from the research questions applicable to each category. Adopted from Creswell (2013:173), the interview guide showed information on; date and place of the interview, names of interviewer and interviewee, position and or qualification of the interviewee and the questions asked. The interview questions had an inviting question at the beginning for ice breaking and a closing remark at the end thanking the interviewees for their time and participation. The questions were refined where there was ambiguity and bias and follow-up questions probed further information. As proposed by Byrman and Bell (2011:478), I gave interviewees room to choose places for conducting the interviews and ensured that the places were appropriate for audio recordings.

Management was interviewed to get an understanding of who they categorise as talent, how talent is recruited and rewarded, and how the reward system reflects on fairness, equity and transparency in an endeavour to retain the talented academics. The aim of the interviews for management were to identify any challenges encountered in implementing the retention policies and measures in place to meet the needs of talented academics to increase the attractiveness of NUL as a preferred employer. Effort was made to unearth what talent management practices were in place for retaining talented academics and the extent to which the mechanisms helped to reduce academic haemorrhage. Management participants were requested to explain the recruitment process and indicate the policy implementations used by the selection committee to explain their choice of the nominated candidates. I encouraged the respondents to talk about real cases and instances based on specifics rather than generalities, while respecting anonymity. The following are some of the crucial questions that were asked to management representatives; why do you think the best talent is leaving the organisation. What can the university do to keep the best talent at

your university? How do you rate the remuneration of you talented academics compared to the other universities in the region or in the labour market? Among the current university policies, which ones are the most preferred by talented employees and have the preferred policies and practices increased attractiveness and or retention to the university.

Questions for academic staff who were still at NUL were focused on their current academic needs and preferences, work environment, conditions of work (satisfying and unsatisfying ones) and employment and work relations. Scheduled interview questions addressed issues relating to how academics embraced the concepts of talent and talent management, whether they viewed themselves as talent, which talent management practices they appreciated and which ones did not meet their needs. Interviews sought data on talent management practices related to how talented academics were compensated for their inputs and competencies compared to the labour market rates and to what other universities were offering employees of their calibre. The interviews assisted explored the talent management practices and activities in place which contributed to personal and professional development of the talent. They also established if individual academics had made any career advancements since joining the organisation.

Telephone interviews were conducted with two academics who had left the university to join other universities outside Lesotho or other private or public organisations. Both face-to-face and telephone interviews were audio recorded using high quality tapes and back-up copies were done on computer files. The interview questions focused on the reasons that motivated the participants to leave the university and join their current employers. Interviews sought suggestions on what the university could have done to prolong their stay

I made effort to stick to the time as I carried out the interviews in a respectful and courteous manner, listening more and avoiding talking more than the interviewees. As the interviews progressed, I was scribbling notes and audiotaping to ensure I capture the most important information. As noted by Bryman and Bell (2011:488), audio recording is an important procedure in the interviewing process to ensure that all data is captured for transcribing. With the participants' consent, audiotaping allowed me to

have a full record of the interview. Notes inscribed quickly during the interviews may have omissions, incomplete or partial sentences and so I used the audio recordings to fill up those gaps. However, interviews are not without challenges. One of them, according to Creswell (2013:173), is the unequal power dynamics between the interviewer and interviewee. To correct the power dynamics, I adopted a more collaborative interviewing approach where the participants and I had opportunity to ask questions during the interviews. In order to deal with the lengthy process of transcribing the audiotapes, I arranged to have an assistant researcher during the interview process who helped with the recording and transcribing of the interviews.

Below is a demographic representation of participants that I interviewed in gathering my empirical data.

Table 3: *Participants demography*

Participants	Gender	Length of service (years)	Level of appointment	Faculty	Nationality
C1	Male	18	Senior lecturer	Business Management	Lesotho
C2	Male	30	professor	Humanities	Zimbabwe
C3	Male	7	Professor (Dean)	Agriculture	Kenya
C4	Female	11	Senior lecturer	Humanities	Lesotho
C5	Female	13	Senior lecturer	Humanities	Lesotho
C6	Female	11	Associate Professor (Dean)	Humanities	Cameroon
C7	Male	9	Associate Professor	Science	Zimbabwe
C8	Female	9	Senior lecturer (HOD)	Humanities	Lesotho
E1	Male	14	Senior lecturer	Humanities	Zimbabwe
E2	Female	16	Senior lecturer	Humanities	Lesotho
E3	Female	18 months	Lecturer	Business management	Zimbabwe
L1	Male	25	Professor	Humanities	Lesotho
L2	Female	15	Lecturer	Humanities	Lesotho
M1	Male	30	Prof (Director)	Humanities	Lesotho
M2	Female	2	Director	Human Resources	Lesotho
M3	Male	10	Professor	Science	Lesotho

3.4.2 Document Analysis

I started the investigation with the collection and analysis of relevant policy documents such as university strategic plans, and human resources policies on recruitment, compensation, promotion and retention, in order to gain insight into the current NUL talent management policies. This data contributed to an understanding of the available and intended TM practices, as framed in the research. The vice chancellor's reports were used to assess challenges that the university was encountering with recruitment and retention of academics with PhDs, associate professors and professors. The documents assisted in getting information on the university's strategy to curb its current problems. As highlighted by De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005:318), in document analysis there is a challenge of locating the appropriate documents and sometimes obtaining permission to use the documents. The other documents that I wanted to analyse were the exit interviews. Unfortunately, I could not manage to access them, as they were going to help to shed light on the views of those who had left the university and could not be reached for interviews. Document analysis was used in order to have a clear understanding of how talent management policies influenced attraction, development and retention of academics at NUL. Additional challenges were that in some cases the documents, for example, the Vice Chancellor's reports were outdated or overtaken by events. Some documents such as exit interview documents were classified and inaccessible for security reasons. However, the merit of documents, unlike interviews where respondents are aware that they are being studied, is that producers of documents do not necessarily anticipate that their documents may be analysed at a later stage so the researcher does not influence contents of the documents.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

In this study, I used the thematic analysis to engage with the data from interviews and documents in answering my research question. My theoretical framework guided in the process of identifying codes or categories and captured the recurring themes in

order to gain understanding of the impact of talent management in retention of academics.

Braun and Clarke (2006:58) maintain that thematic analysis allows the researcher to systematically identify, organise and offer insight into patterns of data in relation to the topic and research question being explored. In this regard, the data analysis lies in generating codes and themes using the research question, theoretical framework and the literature developed earlier. According to Nieuwenhuis (2016:116), coding allows the researcher to retrieve and collect the data associated with certain themes. It enables similar units of the text to be examined together and comparison of different cases to be made.

As suggested by Merriam (2002:6-7), data was analysed using mainly the inductive approach where data was broken into smaller units that are coded in a specific way in order to synthesise the data. However, Braun and Clarke (2006:58) argue that it is unlikely to be purely inductive, as the researcher will always bring something to the data during analysis, totally ignoring the semantic content of the data when coding for a particular theoretical construct. I assigned open codes to different sections of the text and linked suitable research questions to descriptive codes, which reveal common patterns and themes. I adopted a more holistic method of content analysis by interpreting parts or categories of the text in the light of relevance to the research question. This approach enabled me to find ambiguities, differences and contradictions within and among the views of participants on issues of talent management at NUL. According to Nieuwenhuizen (2016:119), data generation process is regarded as complete when the researcher presents the data in a logical and well- structured manner to reveal the essence of the phenomenon under study. Through this process, Flick (2007:101) maintains that a structure in the data is established, which enables deep understanding of the phenomenon and the data itself.

The data was organised and interpreted in different codes within emerging themes, it was examined and differences between the themes were interpreted within the context of NUL. This helped to discover new meaning and comprehension by continuous reference to theory and insights from the data. In-depth discussion and reporting of emerging themes and sub-themes is done in Chapter 4 of this study.

3.5.1 Reporting and interpreting of data

In order to offer rich description of the data, I used direct quotes of participants from interviews to validate my interpretations without revealing the identity of the person. As suggested by Merriam (2002:7), I referred to the literature and the theoretical framework in an endeavour to make sense of the findings within the current body of knowledge and to reveal how it supports existing knowledge or contributes new understanding to the body of knowledge. In addition, Creswell (2013:249) posits that qualitative researchers make use of theoretical lens to form interpretations for new agendas and action plans for improvement or change. With regard to this study, universities may adopt talent management practices to increase retention of talented academics who give institutions a competitive advantage. According to Hennink, Hutter and Biley (2015:276), research results presented in a logical and coherent way, with a clear structure and argument, help the reader to understand the message being conveyed. In analysing the data, I adopted the steps suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2013:141-142). The initial stage was to organise details about the case where facts are arranged in a logical order followed by categorising of data into meaningful groups. In this case, I classified the data according to the research question it answers. On the next step, I interpreted and examined specific documents, occurrences, and other bits of data for specific meanings that might have any relation to the research question. The next stage was identification of patterns of data, scrutinising their interpretations for underlying themes and other patterns that characterised the case more broadly than a single piece of information can reveal. Synthesis and generalisations as an overall portrait of the case were constructed. Conclusions were drawn that could have implications beyond the specific case of talent management studied. In my final report, I integrated data from interviews and document analysis to have a deeper understanding of talent management narratives in universities.

3.6 CODING OF PARTICIPANTS

Coding my participants was based on the status of the participant within the NUL context, which is:

a) those who are still at NUL are coded as "Current"; **C1-8**
b) those who have resigned and are serving notice as "Exit"; **E1-3**
c) those who have left as "Left"; **L1**
d) the management is coded as "management"; **M1-2**

Table 4: *Interview Participants*

Status	Code	Quantity	PhD (Lecturer/ senior lecturer)	Professor	Associate professor
Current	C	8	4	2	2
Exit	E	3	3	0	0
Left	L	2	0	2	0
Management	M	3	0	1	2

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE STUDY

According to Strydom (2005:57), ethics implies preferences that influence behaviour in human relations. De Vos et al. (2005:114) define ethics as a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group, is subsequently widely accepted, and which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards subjects and respondents, employees, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students. The essential ethical issues identified in this study are voluntary participation of respondents, deception of respondents, informed consent, violation of anonymity and confidentiality, harm to participants, accurate and honest reporting of results and findings of the research. The protection of the participants' identities, especially the academic staff who are still at NUL and the individuals that

have left was key in this study (De Vos, et al. 2005:59). I sought informed consent from the management of the university to conduct interviews and obtain permission from participants to interview them. I ensured interviewees anonymity by protecting their identities using codes. I undertook to destroy audio-visual tapes of interviews after five years in case in my findings I might be required to provide raw data from the interviews. I obtained ethical clearance from the University of Free State, Education Research Ethics Committee through my supervisor. According to Strydom (2005:58), I sought approval to carry out my study and familiarised myself with the ethical policy of NUL. As suggested by Strydom (2011:115), in this study I protected the privacy of participants and ensured that participants were not deceived in any way, and that there was no harm done to them. The privacy of participants was highly respected when reporting the data. I avoided falsifying evidence, findings and conclusions by making an honest report and avoiding plagiarising in the process. De Vos, et al (2005:115) emphasise that an ethical research avoids harm to participants, violation of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality.

According to Strydom (2011:117), the ethical principle of 'informed consent' is of ultimate importance. I was granted written and signed approval at NUL to interview the management and academics voluntary participation with the full information of the nature of the study and the terms of participation. As stated by Hennik, et al. (2011:68), informed consent is part of treating the participants in the research process as 'subjects' to whom the researcher is accountable and responsible. In this regard, I did inform my participants of the objectives and aims of the research and explained that it formed part of the integral requirements to fulfil the process of my Master's degree at the University of the Free State.

In terms of confidentiality, the names and descriptions of participants were not used in this research write up. On the consent forms, I used pseudonyms and not real names so that I could track my participants. As a process of gatekeeping, I sought consent from the interviewees to participate in the interview beforehand. On the interview site, I asked participants if they still wanted to go ahead with the interview. A consent form was sent via email, and the participants signed in before the interview date commenced. The signed consent forms were treated with discretion and locked up in a safe place. At the beginning of the interview process, I disclosed the purpose of the study to participants and informed them of the general purpose of the study. Since

participation was voluntary, participants were informed that no payment was offered for taking part in the study. Information considered private and confidential was treated as such, especially that coming from documents. Data generated from the study was stored using appropriate measures where there is a password or a lockable drawer for at least five years before disposal. When analysing the data, I avoided siding with participants by disclosing only positive or negative sentiments but tried to provide multiple perspectives and report contrary findings to keep the study credible.

3.8 INTEGRITY OF THE STUDY

According to Larey (2018:94), discussing the integrity of the study requires the researcher to ask two major questions: "*can my research be trusteed? Did I go about in a sound manner from an ethical point of view.*"

According to De Vos et al. (2011:117), integrity of the study has to do with the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, which affects the quality of the study's outcomes. These same authors posit that for a study to be credible, researchers should have prolonged engagement in the field and should use crystallisation of data sources and methods (multiple data sources, methods and theoretical schemes). Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, Utariainen and Kyngas (2014:2) notes that triangulation deploys multiple and diverse sources of information to form themes in a study. I adopted crystallisation across data sources from different participants and theories (Bourdieu and Adam's theories) and different data generation methods.

3.8.1 Establishing Trustworthiness

According to Elo, et al. (2014:2), the main aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is to support the argument that the inquiry's findings are worth paying attention to. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:181) suggest the following criteria of integrity and trustworthiness in qualitative research; credibility, consistency and transferability:

3.8.1.1 Credibility

According to Nieuwenhuis (2016:123), in order to ensure credibility of the study, there should be well-structured research methods, a theoretical framework that is aligned with the research questions and methods and a research design that matches the research question. Elo et al. (2014:2) propose that from the perspective of establishing credibility, researchers should ensure that those participating in the research are identified and described accurately. Cohen et al. (2011:179) suggests that for qualitative data to be sound, there must be honesty, depth, richness and scope of data from the participants, coupled with the objectivity of the researcher. Hence, credibility is the ability of a research process to generate findings that elicit belief and trust, with the goal to generate new knowledge. In this study, data was obtained from two different sources, that is, the participants who were talented academics and management at NUL and from documents such as strategic plans and other policy documents. The purpose was to become as close as possible to the participants' understanding of the talent management phenomenon. From the knowledge generated, other people can learn and be able to make decisions on talent management in universities, thus the knowledge has to be credible. The main purpose for was to integrate and understand the different perspectives of talented academics and management who are the main actors in talent management in order to increase retention at NUL.

According to Bryman and Bell (2011:430), "criteria for validity are credibility (are the results an accurate interpretation of the participants' meaning), criticality (is there a critical appraisal of all aspects of the research), authenticity (are different voices heard), integrity (are the investigators self-critical)". The author further expands that, validity is an ethical relationship with research participants through participants positioning themselves, having discourses, encouraging voices and being self – reflective. As presented by Creswell and Miller (2000:125), validity refers, not to the data alone, but also to the interpretations drawn from the data and participants. Validation in qualitative research is an attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants. According to Merriam (2009:3), qualitative inquirers establish validity through the lens of participants

because reality is socially constructed and it is what participants perceive it to be. Hence, to increase validity since all interviews are recorded and transcribed, I asked my participants to go through the interview reports for confirmation of accuracy and only the confirmed interview reports were used for further analysis. The same author refers to the process as "member-checking", where the researcher takes the data and interpretations back to the participants so that they confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account. In this regard, I incorporated the comments from participants in the final narrative of the report. This helped to establish credibility of the study from the lens of the participants and minimise the inequality that participants sometimes feel since they have a chance to react to both the data and final write up. The extensive time spent in the field, the detailed thick description, and the closeness of the researcher to participants in the study all added to the value and accuracy of the study. In my analysis of data to get credibility, I attempted to accurately interpret the meaning of the data in order to establish confidence with the readers.

3.8.1.2 Consistency

According to Richards (in Merriam 2009:223), a good qualitative research gets much of its claim to validity from the researcher's ability to display in a persuasively how they got there, and how they built confidence that this was the best way account possible. Patton (2002:570) highlights that the researcher should constantly go back to the data to check if categories, explanations and interpretations are accurate reflections of the findings. Gibbs (in Creswell 2014:203) posits that in order to obtain consistency in qualitative, the researcher has to check transcripts to ensure that there are no obvious errors made during the transcription process. This requires the researcher to be accurate and intentional in checking consistence in the categories, explanations and interpretations. According to Merriam (2009:222), findings should be consistent with the data that the researcher presents. In this regard, I made an effort to present data that was consistent with participants' responses. In order to achieve this, I attempted to explain how the data was generated, gave a description of how participants were purposefully selected at NUL, and how the semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants. Detailed descriptions of the findings are presented in the form of quotes from the interviews in Chapter 4.

3.8.1.3 Transferability

According to Byrman and Bell (2011:398), qualitative researchers are encouraged to give thick descriptions that provide other researchers or readers with a database for making judgement about possible transferability or generalisation of findings to other settings. It is the responsibility of the researcher to offer the readers clear details of the context, research design and nature of participants to assist the readers in making decisions about transferability. Strydom et al. (2005:352) note that to counter challenges of transferability, the researcher should continue to refer back to the original theoretical framework to indicate how the data was generated and analysed. The authors further suggest triangulating multiple sources of data to corroborate and elaborate the research question to strengthen the usefulness of the study to other contexts or settings. One of the strategies suggested by Nieuwenhuis (2016:124) to increase transferability is through purposeful selection of participants who have characteristics that represent the whole population in terms of the context under study.

To ensure a degree of transferability, I provided a rich description of the context of the study, outlining the context of NUL, where it is located and the uniqueness of the university and characteristics of the participants. The context of my study allowed the readers to compare the fit with their own university settings.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In this methodology chapter, I highlighted qualitative research as my research approach and the case study of NUL as my research design. In order to have multiple perspectives on how talent management practices and activities are used to gain competitive advantage, I purposefully selected the following participants; management and talented academics who are at NUL and those who have left to join other organisations. Semi-structured interviews and document analysis are the key instruments that I used for data generation. I have also highlighted how the thematic

analysis was used to come up with thick rich descriptions of findings as a measure to keep the study trustworthy, consistent, transferability and credible. Relevant ethical principles of research involving human subjects and data handling were discussed. The next chapter focuses on data analysis, reporting and interpretation of the data in order to answer the research question.

CHAPTER 4:

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of talent management practices that are meant to retain talented academics at the NUL. In this chapter, I present empirical data from the study which I conducted at NUL in Lesotho at the end of 2018 and beginning of 2019. The purpose of this chapter is four-fold. This chapter presents, discusses and analyses data, and provides the interpretation of each of the four objectives of the study. Thus, the chapter offers various meanings attached to talent and talent management by the participants. This is done to provide an understanding of what talent management practices were being implemented at the NUL in an effort to retain talented academics. As a result, the factors that influence talent management at NUL need to be thoroughly understood because they are essential for the successful implementation of effective talent management practices to enhance retention of talent. These recommendations serve as initial insights prior to being considered sufficiently conclusive to serve as a blueprint for effective talent management practices to retain talented academics. The chapter further reflects on the qualitative presentation and analysis of data using the thematic technique to address the objectives of the study.

In this chapter, I utilised data from both interviews and document analysis to gain a rich understanding of talent management at NUL. The qualitative data was gathered from semi-structured interviews with eight academics who were still at NUL, three who were serving their notice periods, one who had left the university and two management staff members. Documents such as NUL strategic plans and human resource policies have been triangulated to support and enrich the data from the interviews in understanding strategic talent management practices to retain highly qualified academics. The biographical data of participants and analysis of data from documents and interviews make part of the discussion in this chapter. I have aligned the empirical data with relevant literature on meanings of talent management and talent

management practices (cf. 2.5 and 2.7). The empirical data is aligned to the theoretical and conceptual frameworks (cf. 2.3 and 2.2) (Adam's theory of equity and Bourdieu's cultural theory) to reflect on talent management practices meant to retain talented employees. The new insights gained will be used to enhance existing theory (cf. 2.2.1 and cf. 2.2.2).

4.2   PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

I present my research results by picking on each research question and presenting all the constructs from the data that addressed the research question. My analysis and discussion of results are backed up by literature reviewed in chapter 2 and documents analysed (NUL strategic plans, Training policy and newspaper articles). In attempting to answer the research questions in chapter 1, results are presented and discussed under the following constructs that emerged from the data:

- Meaning of talent and talent management
- Talent management practices at NUL
- Role of the government
- Retention strategies
- Work factors

4.3 MEANING OF TALENT AND TALENT MANAGEMENT

The data presented under this heading seeks to gain an understanding of what the NUL management and academics understand about talent management in the context of their university. The constructs that emerged from this heading that are discussed are; meaning of talent and talent management and academic self-image. The meanings are derived from literature and the participants' responses. Initial discussion focuses on the meaning of talent and is followed by the meaning of talent management, and then the individual academic self-image to establish whether academics viewed themselves as talent.

4.3.1 Meaning of talent

The terms talent and talent management lack a clear distinct meaning according to literature. There is a surge in the debates in articles and books, which focus on talent management. Relatively very little literature exists that focuses on talent and talent management in academia, and this is mainly research conducted in the European and corporate context. Thunnissen (2015:11) presents talent as synonymous to highly gifted or genius. The author refers talent to a philosopher or scientist with extra ordinary insights, a great mind, who realises critical breakthroughs in his or her academic field (cf. 2.5). This was supported by most of the interview participants when they were giving different perspectives on the meaning of talent.

One participant said:

> *I view talent as an academic who satisfies the triple mandate of the university; which is teaching, research and community engagement. One whose work is well known and published locally and internationally, with high citations, written books and articles (participant C2).*

Participant M1 had this view of talent;

> I view talent *as academics who are able to use their skills beyond their professional ability. Academics who go beyond the call of duty despite their positions or qualifications.*

For this participant, talent is inclusive, that is, it includes everyone who has professional ability despite his or her position in the organisation or credentials. According to literature, talent is defined as the sum total of a person's abilities, his/her intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgement, attitude, character and drive including ability to learn and grow, (cf. 2.5). One professor shared the view of management on talent as:

> …*academics who possess rare skills in the Science and Maths sections where these skills are rare. Therefore, possession of rare skills is talent. Talent could refer to senior academics like professors, associate professors who can direct the way forward of the university, (participant M2).*

The views of participant M2 resonated with the work of Barkhuizen, Schutte and Slius (2014:116), who categorised talent into inclusive and exclusive domains (cf. 2.5). The definition of Participant M2 concur with these authors' definition of exclusive talent which they refer to as holders of doctorates, associate professors and professors or researchers of new information, theories and inventors of new technology. The focus in this study was on the exclusive approach to talent and focus was more on the selected group of doctors of philosophy, associate professors and professors. This niche group gave National University of Lesotho a brand name and competitive advantage as they contributed immensely to the institution's triple mandate of teaching and learning, research and community service.

Exclusive talent is what Bourdieu (1984:127) refers to as cultural capital, which are forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions, or cognitive acquisitions that equip an individual with appreciation or recognition for a specific field of study. These are the educational qualifications that one holds, e.g. certificates, diploma, degrees, publications etc. (cf. 2.2.2).

One of the participants reflected on the matter as follows:

> *Talent are academics who can be promoted to be heads of departments and deans of faculty. Academics who can occupy key positions within the university set up (Participant C4).*

Contrary to the above mentioned, another participant had a different perspective and adopted the inclusive definition of talent as given by Barkhuizen, Schutte and Slius (2014:117), where talent refers practically to everyone in the organisation who is able to contribute to the organisation's objectives (cf. 2.5). In the case of the NUL, this would refer to the entire academic and support staff with no regard to qualification or position.

One of the current academics said:

> *I view talent as everyone who is employed by the university because the university needs their skills; whether the person is academic or non-academic (support staff). As long as they fulfil the requirements of their job description, in my view they are talent (Participant C1).*

Although most participants agreed that talent is one who satisfies the triple mandates of the university, another academic defined talent as follows:

I believe talent is one who sees opportunities where there are challenges and generates new knowledge and incomes from those opportunities. Someone who can work with minimum resources to produce maximum results (Participant C6).

From the definitions, there seems to be no agreed definition of talent at the NUL as highlighted also in the literature. There is, however, an agreement that talent is one who excels in the key operations of the university, such as teaching, research, community engagement and leadership. This is highlighted by most of the participants. While most academics had, a common view of talent based on level of skills and performance output of a small group, management viewed talent as all academics who satisfied the university level of expected performance. According to university management, talent included every employee but academics felt that talent was a particular segment of academics who could promoted to be heads of departments and deans of faculties. One of the participants felt that

Talent includes every employee that has been hired by the university despite his or her role or qualifications (Participant M2).

These academics had the willingness to grow and could be promoted to executive positions. While most academics had, a common view of talent based on level of skills and performance output of a small group, management viewed talent as all academics who satisfied the university level of expected performance. For both the academics and management, talent denoted key employees who had high qualifications and ranked high in terms of performance and made significant contribution to the overall performance of the university through their creativity and inventions.

One of the participants alludes,

Talent in my view are academics who can have remarkable contribution is the teaching and learning of higher degrees. Have outstanding research work and publications (Participant C3).

At NUL, academics with high skills and knowledgeable who are professors, associate professors and doctoral holders fall in the category of talent. However, the issue of

community engagement did not come out strongly in the definition of talent from both management and academics.

These definitions defined talent depending on the nature of the organisation, the position that one holds and the perspective that the participant held. Talent represents academics who have great insights, high credentials, develop new knowledge in their respective fields of expertise, experienced, and who through research, have managed to contribute meaningfully to solving community problems. Community includes both the scientific community and local community where scientific knowledge can be applied. Talent as the greatest resource in the university mostly contribute to the achievement of the university mission and vision.

4.3.2   Meaning of Talent Management

This section aims to present the different meanings attached to talent management by both academics and management in an effort to understand how talent management was conceived at NUL.

According to Lewis and Heckman (2006:140) talent management emerged as a popular term to cover a wide variety of human resource management practices with a focus on talent pools and talent generally, yet there is no definite agreement as to what talent management exactly is (cf. 2.2.2). One of the participants said:

> *Talent management I guess has to do with the management's efforts to make the employees' working conditions conducive. Putting effort to meet the needs of the employees (Participant E2).*

Another participant defined the phenomenon as follows:

> *Talent management could refer to all the human resources duties and responsibilities to employ and motivate its employees by giving them all the support they need, like recruitment and selection, training and development and promotion (Participant C1).*

Four of the participants pointed to different views on the construct "talent management". This seemed to confirm the of Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramanian

(3013:337) that having the right number of people at the right place at the right time with the right skill sets and levels of motivation is fundamental to talent management, (cf. 2.5). The understanding of the meaning of talent management was shallow from both the management and the academics participants who participated in the interviews. One Participant confessed:

> *I have no idea what talent management is because I have not heard about it. I can only assume it has something to do with duties of human resources (*Participant C4).

Most of the academics indicated that they were not sure of the meaning of talent management since they had not heard such a term being used or spoken at the university. One participant who was part of university management observed it in the response below that:

> *Because the university has no talent management policy or program it makes it difficult to try to define what talent management is. However, I think talent management involves all HR processes that are; recruitment, training and development, remuneration, research and academic support programs to help academics perform their work effectively* (Participant M3).

Another participant reflected on the matter by saying:

> *I have never heard of the term 'talent management' in the academic world so I have no idea what it entails. Probably those in management could have an idea (Participant C3).*

Another participant attempted to define talent management saying:

> *Talent management is about creating a general conducive working environment for talented employees to excel in the triple agenda of the university, which is teaching, research and community engagement (Participant E1).*

He added that:

> *It is the responsibility of management and human resources to do a research on how to create a conducive environment for talent management, because I do not think they even know about it (Participant E1).*

A current participant in the university understood talent management from a human resource perspective, as revealed by his response:

> *Talent management is mostly used in the corporate world and mostly influenced by the western view, but in the African view and university set up, talent management is not well defined; and since the National University does not have such a policy, I cannot distinguish it from human resource processes. From an HR perspective, I quote Armstrong, "TM is the use of interlinked activities to ensure that the university can attract, motivate, develop and retain talented staff in order to meet its set objectives" (Participant C1).*

He was the only participant who could shade some insight into the meaning of talent management. The participant had a sound background in business management and human resource courses. An important aspect from his definition was the important role that the human resource department played in talent management.

From the response of three of the participants, including management as discussed in the above section, it seems that the issue of talent management was not prevalent at the university. One could depict that all the effort by the university to attract, develop and retain the highly talented academics in an endeavour to achieve the triple mandate of the university constituted talent management. Talent management can vary from organisation depending with the context and environment. For example, one of the participants highlighted that talent management was more western and could carry a different meaning in African corporate or higher education context. The various definitions of talent management are pointing to talent being the greatest asset of the organisation, which should be retained at all cost. According to Buttiens and Hondeghem (2012:6), emphasis on talent management was on processes or activities that needed to be integrated to meet the current and future needs of the organisation's talent pool, (cf. 2.2.2). Talent management had to be done in a systematic way with high employee involvement and emphasis on retention of talent. It was asserted that,

TM needed to be differentiated depending on the different career levels taking into consideration readiness and individual needs.

4.3.3 Academic Self-Image

Self-image of an employee is very important because it is how an employee defines himself or herself in an organisation. That self-image determines how talent position themselves in an organisation in terms of social and economic hierarchy. The needs, expectations and preferences of talent are based on their self-image in the university. If talent identifies themselves as the most important asset and the organisation has a different image, that conflict can result in retention issues.

Nenty and Biao (2013:1) affirm that professors and doctorate holders are the soul of the university which itself is a worldwide liberal space for the development of human intellect and genius. These talented academics, in terms of their number and quality, play an imperative role in the ranking of world universities and impacts on the quality of post-graduate and undergraduate educational programmes and university brand name (cf. 2.4). Most participants interviewed identified themselves as talent with exceptional skills and knowledge that gave the university a brand name in the higher education arena. One participant shared the following about talent:

> *I consider myself to be talent because of the nature of consultancies that I get both within and outside Lesotho. The nature of consultancy I get confirms that I am highly skilled and knowledgeable. My students also confirm that I am talent by the quality of lectures I do. My publications reflect that I am talent (Participant C6).*

On the contrary, one participant had this view about his academic image,

> *I do not want to consider myself as talent, as it will sound like I am proud. I would want to consider everyone who works at this university as talent. Everyone in their context believes they are talent so at this university set up everyone is important (Participant E2).*

A professor described his image as such:

*Because I am a professor and a renowned publisher and author, I consider myself as talent even though the university has not considered me as talent (*Participant L1).

It seems there could be a conflict when academics who are professors, associate professors or doctors recognise themselves as talent but feel university management does not recognise them as such, or does not openly acknowledge that they are talent. This recognition could be what Bourdieu's theory cultural capital refers to as social and economic stratification where stratification endeavours to identify and acknowledge talent from the rest of the academics (cf. 2.2.2).

While all participants agreed that talent was a source of value creation at NUL, there was no agreed definition of what talent was. Some defined talent from an individual perspective and others from a very general perspective. There were conflicting ideas as to what talent management was; with some academics defining talent management from an inclusive stance where the term should include every employee, while others felt TM should have an exclusive approach focusing on a specific group of employees. This shows that the university should come up with a generally accepted definition of talent and talent management that all academics can identify with.
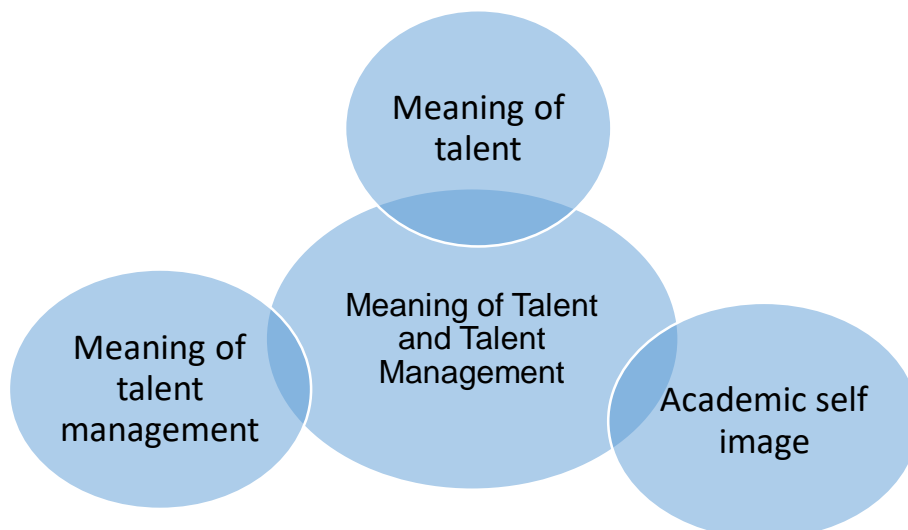
Figure 8: *Summary of the constructs of meaning of talent and talent management*

4.4 TALENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AT NUL

The aim of this study was to gain an understanding of talent management practices that are meant to retain talented academics at the NUL. From a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with talented academics at NUL, the following sub headings of the current talent management practices being implemented were identified; support for research and publication, profit sharing, recruitment and selection, promotion, training and development, work environment, communication and compensation.

Most of the talent management practices highlighted by participants concur with the literature. However, some of the practices such as community engagement and profit sharing were not highlighted from the literature (cf. 2.7).
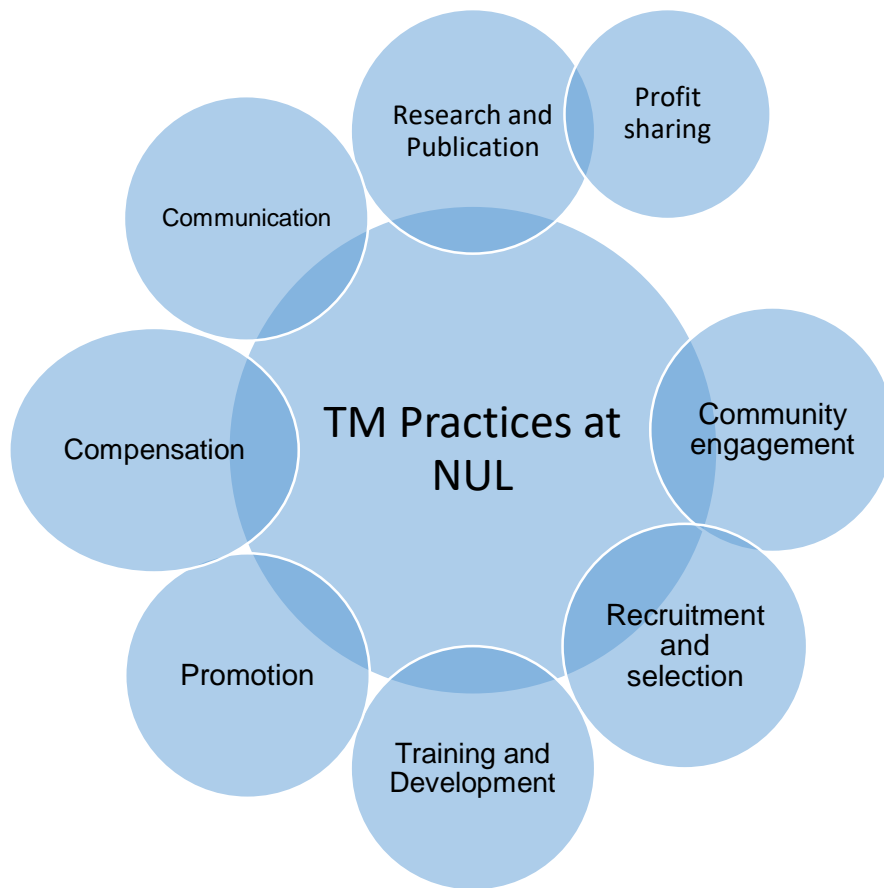
Figure 9: *Summary of TM practices at NUL*

4.4.1 Research and Publication

A common factor that influences TM is the ability of academic staff members to engage in research and publication opportunities. Talent has to be given room to fully utilise their cultural capital and have to create meaningful academic and social networks to further their intellectuality through social capital (cf. 2.2.2). In response to the question on how the university has supported talent in their research work, all the participants acknowledged that the university gave them financial support to attend conferences even though they felt that the funds were not enough. However, they managed to present their research work on international platforms and that gave them the opportunity to network with other academics in presenting useful knowledge necessary to solve societal, educational and economic issues. One of the former employees of NUL had the following to say:

*The university avails R15 000 for conferences per staff member over a period of 2 years which is not sufficient and this sometimes results in staff sponsoring their own conferences. I wish the funds for conferences could be increased to allow academics to attend more conferences (*Participant E2*).*

Bourdieu's theory is of utmost importance to university management to understand that for a university to remain relevant concerning research, it has to put some groups of academics ahead of others in some points (cf. 2.2.2). This was motivated by one of the professors commenting on the limited funds for conferences:

In my opinion, because the university has limited funds, more funds should be allocated to senior academics, who are professors and doctorates so that we keep abreast with other professors in other universities in terms of research. In other universities, senior and junior lecturers are not allocated the same amount for research. Research grants should be allocated according to seniority. Lack of research leads to academic degradation (Participant C5).

From this comment, the proposal was for university management to ensure that even in the face of limited resources when allocating funds for research there has to be segmentation and funds allocated according to the academic credentials and potential research output. The issue of segmenting academics is supported by Bourdieu's theory which states that the university system has a prerogative to strongly recognise and value the variations in educational capital associated with differences in competencies in order to yield high symbolic profit for talented academics (cf. 2.2.2). The response pointed out that talented academics were knowledgeable on how other universities allocated their research grants compared to how it was done at the National University of Lesotho. Armstrong (2009:328) supports the view of this participant when he highlights in his equity theory that employees compare their inputs and their outputs internally and externally for equilibrium. In this case, talented academics make a comparison on the allocation of research grant between

National University of Lesotho and other universities in the region and between lecturers in different levels.

On the contrary, one of the participants had this view:

I think the research funds are enough for me because I do not even have the time to do research because of my workload and I have only claimed the research funds once since I started working at the university in 2004 (Participant C4).

Most of the participants' time was devoted in teaching at the expense of research due to lack of time and limited resources to carry out research. Nenty and Bioa (2013:9) say that engagement of talented employees in collaborative research with colleagues nationally and internationally enhances their social capital, as they get to enjoy acceptance and recognition for their academic outputs, which in turn, result in meaningful academic and collaborative networks (cf. 2.2.2).

One of the current academics confirmed this when he said:

I have been invited nationally and internationally in my area of expertise, which means my work is being acknowledged, and have managed to make meaningful academic connections (Participant C6).

He further noted that:

*These conferences have opened doors for me to supervise higher degrees (masters and PhD) from other universities since here at NUL there is no higher degrees in my subject area. I am also now an external examiner through connections from conferences and sabbatical vacations (*Participant C6)*.*

On the issue of publications, four of the participants expressed their disappointment with the removal of an incentive that used to be given to academics for every publication. One of them explained the following concerning the issue:

The University used to pay us R3000 for each article published but it was removed and there is no longer any motivation to publish. Since that money was withdrawn, I have not published. (Participant E1)

The HR participant responded to this issue by highlighting that:

The reason for withdrawal of the R3000 for every publication was to regulate that academics should publish with accredited journals and not with predatory journals, which most academics were using to push for promotions and also for a financial incentive. The other reason was the university is having financial constraints and was trying to cut down on operation costs and focus the funds to more critical areas (Participant M1).

From the above responses, it appears academics were ambitious and wanted to progress in their professional careers. Staff further showed a tendency to contribute to sustainable research. The university could support talent by providing more opportunities for research and social capital. The university could consider investing in the social capital of its talented academics by providing opportunities to make connections through attendance at conferences, providing sabbatical leaves and other research collaborations with other academics in the higher education arena. This could contribute greatly towards self-actualisation of employees, as research is one of the key factors towards one's career growth.

.4.1.1 Profit Sharing

During the interviews, some participants raised concerns on the issue of profit sharing on consultancy and external projects done by academics. It was suggested that NUL should retain a less percentage of the proceeds from consultancy projects. Instead, the university should promote consultancy by allowing academics to retain as much profit for external projects as a way of generating income for the university.

One of the participants categorically stated that:

*Currently, the university takes 40% of the profits that I make from my external consultancy and projects but the only contribution of the university is their internet and office space that I use. There is no other support that I get from the university. This high percentage discourages academics to declare their projects yet they will be using university resources and time to do their projects (*Participants E2).

Most of the participants were of the opinion that the university, in consultation with academics, should claim a reasonable percentage of the profits from consultancy and external projects because most of the successful projects benefit the university by promoting its name and reputation. One participant argued:

> *Apart from negotiations on profit percentage, I suggest that there should be a way of rewarding or recognising academics who bring most funds to the university because they raise the profile of the university and contributes to the financial wellbeing of the institution (*Participant C1).

One participant from management highlighted the following:

> *The policy on profit sharing is as old as the university itself and when the academic financial value was still competitive, no one was bothered about the percentage. Now that the academics' salaries have been eroded by inflation, talented academics are worried about the percentage since this has become another avenue of income to supplement their salaries. I think a review of the percentage is a valid point (Participant* M1)*.*

The above sentiments indicate consensus between academics and management on the need to review the profit-sharing policy in order to avoid academics doing their consultancy in silence at the expense of the university. Lowering of the profit percentage for the university would encourage academics to declare their projects and help academics to supplement their low incomes. The university would also benefit, as many academics would start declaring their projects unlike the case now where most projects being done using the university time and resources are not being declared and the individuals pocket all the money. An increase in the percentage for profit sharing could also boost academic morale and loyalty to the university. However, academics should not be motivated to declare their projects by the profit percentage but they should do it in all honesty.

4.4.2 Community Engagement

Giving back to the community through community engagement is a significant part of talent, social capital creation, and dissemination of knowledge and utilisation of such

knowledge in contributing practical solutions to problems in the society (cf. 2.2.2). One of the participants remarked:

> *The University has totally divorced itself from one of its mandate of community engagement. We used to carry out meaning research in our communities in an effort to solve some of the community problems but now the focus for research is for publication and promotion* (Participant C4).

The participant from management lamented that:

> In *as much as the university has a mandate to do community engagement, the shoestring budget has forced the university to neglect that social responsibility, and at some point, the university even closed down some of the research centres that where all over the country (Participant M2).*

This means that the social capital through community engagement has to be differentiated from research that academics carry out to satisfy promotion requirements. Research done through community engagement mainly contributes to specific societal problems. In cases where the budget is not enough, academic focus will only be on research that profits them directly at the expense of the community that the university serves (cf. 2.2.2). In order to keep the university relevant to its community, there should be a balance between research for promotion and for solving the problems of the community.

From the responses, it can be deduced that universities should make an effort to invest in the social capital of its talented academics by providing opportunities to make connections through attendance at conferences, providing sabbatical leave and fostering research collaborations with academics in the higher education arena.

Most of the responses suggest that since the university does not have enough funds to support research, assistance for other external grants provision for research should be made available through the university channels. Academics could also be give room to search for research grants through their social capital connections. Where the research funds are limited, one major category of highly academics either in groups or individually who create value for the university should benefit more from the limited resources. These talented academics are most likely to return much to the university and community on any investment done in their career development.

4.4.3 Recruitment and Selection

One of the most common factors that inform talent management within the sphere of higher education is recruitment and selection of talented academics who give the university a competitive advantage. According to Krishnan and Sonia (2015:304), the hiring of talent has become a major challenge for higher education institutions because institutions are competing with each other to attract and retain the best available academic talent (cf. 2.7.1). One of the participants in management reflected on the issue thus:

> It is *not easy to recruit talented academics to the university because of the working conditions and financial conditions of the university. The most difficult positions to fill are for professors and PhD holders because they are hunted for by other universities and the business companies* (Participant M1).

In talent management, the recruitment process plays an essential role in appointing the most appropriate talent that the university can retain. Interviews helped the organisation to meet and interact with top-rated applicants and to explore issues related to suitability of candidates for the job. Interviews could be used to establish person-subject fit, organisational fit, creativity and innovativeness of a candidate, and to confirm their international experience, their social competency and networks (cf. 2.7.1).

Another participant M2 explained that the recruitment process:

> *The University follows the ordinary way of advertising, selecting, shortlisting and then appointing. Most of the time, no interviews are done because of the costs involved. Interviews are done only on exceptional situations like management positions (Participant M1).*

One challenge that was highlighted by one participant in management was that, in the labour market, there is talent with desired competence but they are available at an exorbitant price that the university cannot afford. (*The university has a challenge to make itself more attractive because talented academics are plenty on the labour market but we cannot afford their price*) (Participant M1).

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The above responses suggest that recruitment should ensure that the university has the right talent in place, at the right time. It is imperative to conduct interviews to check the talent's judgment, learning agility, adaptability, the fit between academics' goals and the values of the university. Hence, the need for a well-designed hiring process to give a clear read on these areas. In order to have a comprehensive recruitment process, interviews play an integral part and should not be skipped because background checks will not be enough to validate what is in one's resume, and will not give the whole picture of one's professional goals. Participants' responses suggest that, to ensure a sufficient supply of talent at all levels, a separate or differentiated recruitment and selection process for talented academics should be considered as some applicants are more valuable than others.

4.4.4 Training and Development

This section aims to uncover how training and development of talent impacts on the retention of academics at NUL as presented by various participants. Wadesango (2016:112) reiterates Bourdieu's claim that sustained development of academic skills and competencies remains a critical strategy for improving the quality of graduate outputs, (cf. 2.7.2). He further observes that all universities need to develop and maintain effective programmes of academic development so that academics are subjected to a process of continuous professional and scholastic development, as a way of producing effective and quality educational programmes and graduates, and retaining the most sought after talent.

From all the participants, it was evident that the National University of Lesotho considers training and development as one of the major aspects, in an effort to retain its talented employees, through its Localisation and Training Board for Basotho (LTB) board.

One participant explained the purpose of the training policy in the following way:

> *The LTB policy was established to develop and retain Basotho talent. This policy aims to train and improve skills for Basotho academics in an effort to reduce the number of expatriates at the university. The university pays for academics to go and improve their qualifications, and when they come*

back, they are bonded for five years as a retention strategy. The policy only caters for Basotho nationals (Participant M2).

The Localisation Training Board of (1977:1), which is still in operation, aims to formulate a policy document regarding localisation and rapid promotion and to draw up a comprehensive training programme in order to upgrade existing staff. On the same issue, another participant commented:

The problem with this policy is that effort has been always in developing or making talent from within the nation but little has been done to retain the talent (Participant C1).

From the responses, in order for training and development to be an effective practice of talent management, it should aim to attract local employees and employees coming from elsewhere because of the opportunity to advance their credentials, and should be used to retain the developed employees. However, one expatriate participant who had worked at NUL for several years lamented that the training and development policy had not been employed fairly despite him being loyal to the university for many years and having contributed greatly to the success of the university. One participant lamented:

The University has put a lot of effort to develop and improve its talent but in a discriminatory way, where attention and resources are focused on Basotho nationals and we expatriates have been excluded for years (Participant E3).

Badat (2010: 16) who observes that government funding for universities is inadequate because of new demands and expectations on universities, supports the issue of equal training and development opportunity raised by participants. However, there has to be equity of opportunity and enhancement of quality of academic training and development programmes, especially in the face of limited resources (cf. 2.2.1).

Keissling and Harvey (2006:1310) note that the concept of talent management can benefit and enhance knowledge management. Knowledge is regarded as the most substantial asset in a university, and is considered as one of the intangible sources of competitiveness (cf. 2.7.2). Hence, it is imperative for those assigned with talent management execution to recruit academics with tacit knowledge and experience in

the organisation, and invest in their training and development in order to retain them. It can be deduced that it is sometimes better to develop talents internally and retain them as a valuable asset to the university. Developing talent is not enough if there is no strategy to retain them and benefit from the investment made.

Literature indicates that employees' knowledge, skills and capabilities need to be boosted and recognised as a vital source of competitive advantage (cf. 2.7.2). One participant at NUL observed that:

> *Professors need long life learning programmes and available funds or opportunities for academics to advance through Lesotho Board Training should be complemented by talent's performance, academic potential and readiness to develop. Mentoring and personalised development plans are key* (Participant C2).

Responses from participants suggest that when it comes to development of talented academics, the focus could be on development of key skills like research. Training and development should not be random but be more focused on staff personal goals, staff role in the university, and staff readiness to achieve both individual and organisational goals. The data suggests that it is imperative for the university to locate areas where competencies fall short of what is required, and develop training and development programmes that can be employed to improve the quality of available talent, as a result increasing the university's appeal as a preferred employer. The university may avoid spreading limited resources for development, equally across all employees and yield the best returns when talented individuals receive a differential focus. The university can adopt the "Investing in the Best" approach.

4.4.5 Promotion

Talent management should also be consistent with the promotional policies and leadership development system of the organisation as a major source of competitive advantage (cf. 2.9.3). One participant indicated that at the NUL, academics are promoted and demoted through the Academic Staff Appointment committee (ASAC).

He added that promotions criteria are based on what you have achieved as an individual. For example, he noted:

There is criteria for one to be promoted to associate professor; one should have served in an administrative post, must have a PhD and must have made a certain number of publications with reputable journals. However, the criteria for serving in an administrative position has been waivered. Promotion rules have been relaxed so that even young academics can move fast up the ladder. Length of service for promotion has been cut, for example, one can be associate professor when he has served for twelve years but now it has been reduced to seven years, as long as one meets the rest of the criteria (Participant C2)*.*

From literature, promotion criteria and guidelines should be clearly stated in the university's promotion policy to reflect equity (cf. 2.2.1). Participants' responses point out that promotion is perceived to be fair when it incorporates one's work experience, educational level, and work achievements associated with effective job performance in one's portfolio. This suggests that talented academics are motivated to stay in the university if they see opportunities for growth and practical navigable academic promotions criteria. Promotion is also seen as a form recognition of an individual's input in the university. Participants suggested that the performance, ability to develop and promotion of talented academics has an influence on the ability of an organization to compete in the academic arena.

4.4.6 Compensation

A common factor that influences TM is the ability of an organisation to compensate its employees in a competitive manner. Swanepoel et al. (2008:475) highlight that remuneration is the heart of the employment relation where there is an exchange of an economically motivated relationship. The employer provides a mixture of rewards valued by the employee and in turn, the employee provides time, talent and effort towards the achievement of organisational goals (cf. 2.3). Against this background, an attempt was made to establish how both the university and talented academics viewed the implementation of compensation as a retention strategy.

There were mixed views from participants about the issue of compensation, but there was consensus that academics had suffered a decline in the real value of their salaries, which resulted in universities having problems of recruitment and retention of talented academics (cf. 2.3). One professor highlighted that:

> *Salaries have been stagnant for too long and there has not been inflationary adjustments for ages. Salaries have been eroded by inflation and this has caused many people to seek alternatives, either to leave or to do other jobs to supplement their salaries* (Participant C1)*.*

Universities have to ensure that their compensation (economic and non-economic) is eternally equitable and externally competitive in order to reduce talent migration due to economic reasons (cf. 2.3). One of the participants currently at NUL expressed that:

> If *one compares the salary of a professor in other sister universities in the region, you will be shocked by the gap. The salary of a professor here at NUL is equal the salary of a lecturer at the sister universities (Participant C5).*

Another lecturer participant commented on the issue of remuneration as follows*:*

> *When I went for sabbatical leave at one of the universities in the region, I was shocked to know that I have a PhD and am a senior lecturer but I earn a salary far below my counterparts. That motivated me to look for another job and that is why I am leaving by end of this month to join another university (*Participant E2).

In the framework of the social capital theory, Bourdieu (2014:21) perceived the role of academic credentials in social reproduction and reiterates that cultural capital facilitates the acquisition of educational credentials, yet that educational credentials are an important mechanism through which wealth and power are transmitted hence the argument that talented academics should be highly rewarded (cf. 2.2.2). Participants E2, C4 and C1 expressed the same sentiments that after the hard work in acquiring their PhDs and they thought their salaries where going to be commensurate to the effort they had put in their studies, only to have an insignificant salary increase.

Another participant commented on the issue thus:

I worked very hard to get this PhD hoping that it will improve my salary and I will be able to provide for my family, to my surprise I had an insufficient increase of a figure that I cannot even say. I literally cried and was extremely disappointed (Participant E2).

Another participant said:

I wasted my time doing PhD because the salary gap between a PhD holder and a master's holder is very small. If I get a job somewhere, I will leave immediately (Participant C1)*.*

From the responses, these three participants were expectant that the increase in their credentials was automatically going to increase their status and their remuneration as one of the participants puts it:

What is normal in other universities is the more one achieves academically, the more they are paid, but here it is the opposite (Participant E3).

Another respondent brought another dimension to the issue of remuneration:

*When I got my PhD, my workload increased and now I am teaching postgraduate students which is more challenging but salary has actually depreciated instead of increasing (*Participant C4)*.*

Contrary to most of the participants' views was the view of the following participant:

*The University does not pay me what is commensurate to the work I do and at the going market rate but I am not worried about their salary because I have made strong collaborations with other universities in the region during conferences and I am getting triple my salary. I am supervising postgraduate students and writing modules for other universities and have research grants. I am staying here so that I can just use the name of the university for my career development, not for their salary (*Participant C6)*.*

One of the concerns that was raised on remuneration was the issue of bonus. Most of the participants expressed their frustrations on the lack of bonuses at the end of the year compared to other universities (cf. 2.2.1). Some of the participants were of the opinion that if bonuses were awarded, they would cover a gap that is created with their low salaries. One of the participants said:

I am going to another university in the region because they offer 100% bonus every year to lecturers and 80% to senior lecturers and 75% to those in the professor level. I have worked here for two decades but there is no bonus to say thank you even when the university was financially sound (Participant E1).

This response suggested that talent expected bonus as a form of recognition and motivation. After a long hard working year, there was an expectation for the university to show gratitude to its employees. Some talented academics used the name of the university to open multiple avenues of revenue to supplement their salaries. The data indicated that despite their salaries being among the lowest in the region, they were benefiting more by staying than looking for universities with better salaries and loosing other streams of income. Watson (2010:2) argues that, while financial limitations are always real, there is never enough money in any organisation, but instead organisations should segment their talent pool and invest differently in each segment in order to address talented academics' needs and expectations (cf. 2.3). Increase in demand for higher compensation from talented academics could be because of competition for highly skilled academics within and across universities in the region and across the globe.

4.4.7 Communication

One factor that came out strongly which had an effect on TM and staff retention at NUL was communication. As indicated by Tyagi, Signh and Aggarwal (2017:50), communication in organisations should be done properly and no one should feel that they are left out (cf. 2.7.3). During interviews there were mixed views on the issue of communication. One of the participants lamented:

NUL is not strong in communication on what is happening with academics. Staff rely on grapevine. By not communicating with staff, we feel left out (Participant E3).

Another participant said:

The university is losing staff because of bad communication from the level of head of departments, deans and management. Communication is slow because they still use traditional ways of communication (Participant C5).

He then suggested:

Communication could improve if they make use of emails, improve internet connection, and do away with the traditional way of circulating memos around with a messenger (Participant C5).

One of the professors expressed that since the coming of the new Vice Chancellor communication has improved in a great way.

The Vice chancellor and deans meet on weekly basis to monitor and assess the university situation; a new development, which has improved communication in the organisation (Participant M2).

While this participant professed that all staff members were now well informed of the vision, mission, progress and direction of the university, one participant had a different opinion.

Academics are frustrated because management is not communicating the vision of the university to them. They are not selling the vision strongly ad we do not know where we are going (Participant C1).

The human resource participant concurred with the above participant that communication needs to improve because most of the academics do not know some of the basic university policies and are not involved in the policy formulation. She observed that the policy making process had low employee involvement and staff only knew about introduction or changes on policies when they had been finalised.

Academics should be involved in every stage of university conversation especially senior academics (Participant M1).

The above sentiments are supported by the work of Tyagi et al. (2017:50) who indicate that communication of programmes and policies in the organisation should be open, transparent and continuous, so that no one in the organisation feels left out (cf. 2.7.3). This also calls for feedback from talent on matters that concern them to be taken seriously. Participants' responses suggest that communication should be a two-way

system to avoid resentment and resistance from employees in the organisation. From the data, one could deduce that for academics to feel that they are part of the university, policies, programmes, developments should be communicated properly, and feedback provided timeously. When talented academics are fully aware of the vision and mission of the university, it increases their commitment and loyalty and keeps them focused towards a common goal. Effective communication allows the academics to perceive how their own personal goals fit in the university goals and can help to reduce turnover.

In this section, the participants highlighted the talent management practices in practice at NUL as follows: communication, research and publication, profit sharing, compensation, promotion, training and development, recruitment and selection and finally community engagement. Some of the practices enhanced retention of academics. However, some of the practices needed to be reviewed in order to increase retention of academics.

4.5 ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

This theme aims to establish the role of the government of Lesotho in ensuring sustainable talent retention at NUL. The role of the university came out strongly for all the participants and highlighted that government as the main stakeholder was playing a crucial role in the running of the university affairs. Under this construct, two sub headings came out strongly; the issue of university autonomy and of the university funding and how these issues affected the university's effort to retain talented academics.

4.5.1 University Autonomy

A greater degree of autonomy is important in universities to promote efficiency and flexibility in decision-making (cf.2.7.3 and 2.8). Three of the participants (C2, M1 and M2) were concerned about the low autonomy of the university as a major factor that affected retention of talented academics at the university. One participant currently at NUL highlighted that:

The *University has low autonomy because government as the main stakeholder controls most of the things including the budget and other major operations (Participant* C2).

The participants highlighted that the university had low autonomy on choosing their own vice chancellor, making some of the financial decisions independently, and doing promotions without much influence from the government. However, it was clear from participant in management that:

NUL cannot source funds or seek financial assistance from either donors or other governments that might wish to assist without the approval of Lesotho government (Participant M2).

It was suggested by most participants that if the government could afford the university high autonomy in decision-making concerning financial and recruitment matters, it could assist a lot in retention of academics. Certain government policies were affecting retention of talent, especially the labour law that stated that expatriates were supposed to be hired on renewable two-year contract basis. One participant in management lamented that:

The government has to revise its policy on engaging expatriates on two-year contract basis. This has a serious impact on retention. If the contracts could be made to be at least five years if the option of permanent engagement is not feasible. This will give a bit of stability to out talented expatriates (Participant M2)*.*

One of the participants cited Sanyal (1995:15) who notes that staff management in universities has been made complex, especially in Africa, by the need to phase out expatriates staff who are expensive and often employed on short term basis (cf. 2.9). One participant indicated that:

Being an expatriate, I have to be always searching for a stable job elsewhere because here at NUL, expatiates are employed on two year contract with gratuity at the end of every contract, and have no pension. It does not matter how long you have worked at the university, the government dictates that you can only be given a two-year contract at a time. The university cannot decide otherwise. Therefore, as soon as I get

something more permanent or a longer contract, I will leave (Participant C3).

Another participant in management commented on the issue of low autonomy as follows:

There is too much control and governance from the government, which is hindering productivity and creativity of both university management and academics (Participant M3).

These responses suggest that low autonomy of the university affected decisions on issues of employment contracts, especially of talented expatriates, which posed a great challenge on retention (cf. 2.8). The responses from participants indicated that the government had a major role to play in the issue of talent management and retention of talent in terms of its labour laws and financial support to the university. The direct interference and state control on the university could be reduced and grant the university greater institutional autonomy, which could improve university efficiency (cf. 2.8).

4.5.2 University Funding

Funding of universities, especially state funded institutions, is an imperative in the implementation of talent management and retention of talent. A further frustration expressed by both academics and university management on the role of the government was the issue of university funding. During the interviews, both lecturers and management acknowledged that the university as a public institution received its funding from the government and this had a serious impact on salaries since the government had been reducing the subventions every academic year for the past few years (cf. 2.8). At the time of the interviews, one interviewee confirmed that the government subventions were less by 35% from the previous year's budget. One participant lecturer remarked:

Government keeps cutting the yearly subventions for the university and as a result, the university cannot afford to increase salaries. This has caused salaries to be stagnant for years causing academics to look for opportunities elsewhere (Participant C1).

One participant in management categorically stated that the issue of low subventions had hit the university hard as more and more talented academics, especially professors and doctorates were leaving and the university was not in a position to counter offer what other institutions were offering them (cf. 2.8). The participant suggested that:

For sustainability, the government could make the university to be more autonomous especially in terms of sourcing funds and have less control on the operations of the university (Participant M1).

One participant brought a very different dimension on the lack of financial support from the government. He argued that:

Since 2002, there has not been adequate support from the government because of political instability in the country (Participant C4).

One of the academics, who had left the university, supported the above sentiment:

I did not leave the university because of low salaries because I have been paid peanuts for many years. I left the university because I could not tolerate the high control and dictatorship from the government that is affecting the efficiency of the university (L1).

Most of the participants supported the idea that the government should grant high autonomy to NUL (cf. 2.8). Respondents also suggested that the government should grant the university autonomy to charge students economic fees so that it can cover its operational cost (cf. 2.8). This move would relieve the government of being the sole source of funding for NUL. On the funding issue, one participant remarked as follows:

*The best way out of this economic crisis is for the government to allow NUL to charge economic fees and it takes away subventions. The reason why the government is not accepting the proposal is that, government is the main sponsor of students and it will then pay more through the National Manpower Economic Plan (*Participants M2).

Another participant, commenting on the same issue of raising funds by charging student economic fees, highlighted:

Though the idea of charging economic fees is practical and reasonable, it is politically wrong. Government should also allow the university to source funds from other avenues outside of the government, for example, from the corporate world and other government and in Africa and abroad (Participant M1)*.*

From the responses, there was a common perception that the government should grant NUL greater autonomy and allow it to run its own affairs. That would give the university an opportunity to raise and manage its own funds independently. Participants felt that failure by the government to either adequately fund the university or grant autonomy would see the academic haemorrhage continuing, standards and quality of education deteriorating (cf. 2.8). The data suggests that government, as the major stakeholder, had to work together with the university to come up with effective policies to assist in the retention of talented academics at the NUL. The responses from participant suggested the need for the government to revisit some of its labour laws in order to retain talented expatriates. Autonomy to charge economic fees from students and to explore other avenues of funding would allow the university to award academics economic compensation, improve their working conditions, and increase retention, (cf. 2.8). However, caution is needed when increasing tuition fees to avoid commoditisation of access to university education beyond affordability of less privileged families.

4.6 RETENTION STRATEGIES AT NUL

One of the key intentions of talent management is retention of talent in order to increase the competitiveness and value creation of the university. Against this background, an attempt was made under this theme to establish the retention strategies that were currently being implemented at NUL and possible strategies that talented academics proposed in order to increase retention. The following two strategies came out strongly as retention strategies at NUL from both management and talented academics, that is, payment of retention allowance, and extended retirement age.

4.6.1 Retention Allowance

All participants seemingly agreed that though there was no written retention strategy at the university, the organisation had made an effort to put in place a retention allowance. This allowance was 10% of basic salary of academics who had doctorates and those who were professors (senior academics). While it was acknowledged as a retention strategy, academics felt that it was too little since it was 10% of a very low basic salary and did not have much effect on their salary. It was suggested that the allowance be reviewed upwards rather than maintain the status quo.

One of the participants reiterated that:

> Years back, 10% was making a significant impact as an incentive for highly qualified academics but now it is swallowed by bank charges and it is as good as it is not there (Participant C1).

Some lecturers however, thought that the university needed to put in place a comprehensive retention policy specifically for the senior academics instead of just an allowance. One of the professors commented:

> The University offers senior academics with PhDs a 10% retention allowance of the employee's basic allowance. This is the only retention strategy that I know but I wish the university could do more, otherwise it will keep losing its talented employees to other organisations who are serious about the welfare of their highly skilled employees (Participant C4).

While the academics suggest for the university to do more, management expressed that:

> The University acknowledged that the allowance had been overtaken by inflation, but because of the shoestring budget that the university is working with, it may not be possible to increase the allowance from 10%. If the financial situation of the university improves anytime, there could be a possibility to raise the percentage (Participant M2).

The above responses suggest that all academics and management participants acknowledged that the university was currently under financial constraints. However, academics noted that the percentage was too low and should be reviewed upwards

considering the rate of inflation now from the time the 10% was decided upon. From the participant's responses, it seemed 10% retention was no longer enough to motivate academics or to make talented academics appreciated and acknowledged as the valued talent of the university.

Participants suggested that the university could carefully consider the importance of economic and cultural capital that talented academics had and convert it into economic capital in a more competitive manner. The participants suggested that NUL should take into consideration that the higher the credentials one has, the higher the demands and expectations for the return on talent's academic investment in financial and non-financial terms. When talented academics feel that the returns for their investment is low or insufficiently recognised, they either vegetate by scaling down in their work or take the drastic step of looking for opportunities in other universities outside the country or join the private sector (cf. 2.3).

4.6.2 Retirement Policy

Extended retirement age was one of the retention strategies that most of the professor participants expressed with excitement as most of them were towards retirement. There seemed to be a lot of appreciation from all professors on the new retirement policy that was introduced by the new Vice Chancellor. Most academics acknowledged that the current Vice Chancellor was trying to put measures in place to reduce talent mobility. One professor noted that:

> *Retirement age has been moved from 65 to 70 or 71 years according to individual strength. Council has already approved this retention policy for academics with PhDs, associate professors and professors (Participant M3).*

From the participants, this came as a big relief to most talented academics as one participant explained:

> *When I turned sixty, I felt I was now at the best stage of my career where I am a seasoned researcher, ready to mentor junior academics but knowing that I was going to retire in a few years was affecting me. This came as a big relief for me and to my career (Participant C1).*

Brewster (2008:129) observes that, some universities have fifty-five to sixty years as the retirement age which means the universities lose the best talent when they are at the climax of their careers. This is the stage they can now offer the best service to the university through their accrued teaching and research experience over years (cf. 2.9.2). Contrary to what other universities are doing on the issue of retirement, NUL has an advantage of maximising the teaching and research experience of their talent by increasing the retirement age to seventy and seventy-one (cf. 2.10.2). From the responses, it appeared that the university could benefit from other universities where retirement age was between sixty and sixty-five by engaging those talents to come and conclude their careers at the university. This retention strategy gave the university a competitive advantage, especially for academics who were in their late fifties and early sixties who may not find the motivation to move to other universities when they have an advantage of retiring at seventy or seventy-one at NUL.

The data indicated that extension of retirement age was one of the major issues that all talented academic would put serious consideration on as it affected the closure of their careers and any policy that send them to retire early may have deterring factors on retention.

4.7 WORK FACTORS

One of the factors that influence TM is the working conditions of talented academics as they carry out the triple mandate of the university that is teaching, research and community engagement. Against that background, an attempt was made to get an understanding from the participants how their working conditions or work factors affected talent management (cf. 2.11.2). From the interviews, the following constructs came up strongly relating to the working conditions at NUL: the work environment, work relationships, teaching and learning resources, the nature of work in terms of level of challenge, and the family responsibility of talented academics.
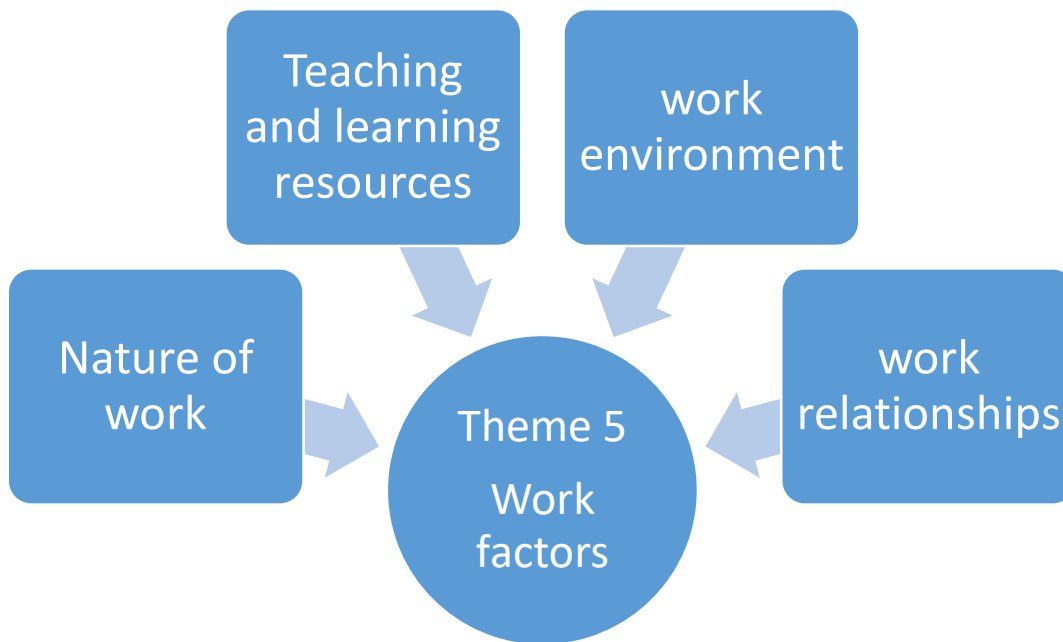
Figure 10: *Summary of the Work Factors*

4.7.1 Work Environment

Most of the participants acknowledged that the working environment was friendly and conducive to work (cf. 2.9). One participant on the exit process made this comment:

> *Despite all, I had friendly colleagues, the environment was conducive and I will always cherish the environment. My HOD was inclusive in his approach to work* (Participants E3).

On the contrary, two of the participants who were exiting the university concurred that the working environment was no longer productive for them because there were no longer growth opportunities career-wise and even for their families. One of them asserted:

> There *are no longer opportunities for growth because the relationships in my department are no longer conducive for me (*Participants E1)*.

One professor current at NUL was of the opinion that the working environment was deteriorating, and no one seemed to be caring about it since some of the infrastructure in the lecture halls were falling, and lights were not working well (cf. 2.7.3). The professor commented:

The working environment is deteriorating each day with chairs and desks falling down, most lights in the lecture halls are not working and no effort is being made to install smart boards (Participant C4).

Sanyal (1995:17) indicates that deteriorating working conditions in universities have caused a significant number of academic staff to go and work as cabinet ministers and directors, technical advisors in government departments, which poses a challenge on universities to retain the best talent and NUL is no exception (cf. 2.8).

A number of the participants emphasised how the physical work environment was affecting the talent in the execution of their duties. They expressed that the working environment needed to be clean and safe. Another participant had this to say:

*The ablutions in one of the lecture halls have not been working for a long time and makes the environment unsuitable for effective learning to take place. Lecture halls are littered most of the time (*Participant C7*).*

From this response, it suggests that talented academics were concerned about the conducive working environment as they spend most of the time at work and the environment influenced their productivity (cf. 2.7.3). If the physical environment was not tidy and looked neglected, it negatively affected their work too. It could be suggested that the work environment could be improved by fixing broken infrastructure, fittings and lighting to make the environment more conducive and inspiring.

4.7.2 Work Relationships

Working relationships were observed as one of the work factors that affected TM and retention of academics (cf. 2.9). One of the participants commented that the working relationships as one of the reasons that had affected her work environment. (*The toxic working relationships are a hindrance to my career progress and academic work (*Participant E3)*.*

Commenting on the negative work relationships among academics, one participant alluded that:

Colleagues are always quarrelling and sometimes undermining each other's intelligence. Relationships are toxic and that is affecting stability of academics in some departments (Participant C2).

These responses suggested that work relationships among academics were of paramount importance. Responses indicated that it was the responsibility of both the talented academics and management to ensure healthy working relationships. From the data, it seems some retention problems could arise from poor and unhealthy working relationships resulting in some talent quitting the organisation. Participants proposed that the working environment should be made conducive to promote healthy relationships among employees, where all academics were free to express their ideas and views without judgement or ridicule. Meaningful relationships and interactions with co-workers was an important factor to academics, which could not be taken for granted in talent management (cf. 2.7.3).

4.7.3 Teaching and Learning Resources

Retention problems could be aggravated by availability of resources for talent to effectively carry out their work (cf. 2.9). Most of the participants agreed that a well-resourced working space motivated employees to carry out their duties and responsibilities effectively. Collings and Mellahi (2009:309) depict a limitation that TM practices tend to focus more on the relevance of employment practices and neglect the other work aspects like work design, job rotation, engagement, commitment and job resources which are useful instruments, but are rarely mentioned in TM literature, (cf. 2.11.2 and 2.8). From the interviews, the issue of inadequate teaching and learning resources came out strongly, with most of the participants indicating that not much attention is given to job resources. Responses from participants expressed that high results were expected from talented academics but with limited supply of resources. One participant asserted:

*To academics, it is demoralising to work with little or no resources at all. Internet is slow and sometimes there is no internet connection. Printing is also an issue. There are inadequate printing facilities, either there is no paper or there is no toner (*Participant C1)*.*

Another participant was concerned with the condition of science laboratories:

The laboratories are under-quipped and some of the equipment is outdated and it limits my work. I spend most of the time trying to improvise which makes my work more difficulty (Participant E3).

One of the participants current at NUL expressed that*:*

I struggle to teach my courses because I do not have a language laboratory and it frustrates me because I feel I am not giving my students the quality education they deserve (Participant C4)*.*

Tygai et al. (2017:49) concur with the above sentiments when they highlight that one of the causes of retention problems in the education sector was insufficient resources to carry out one's duties (cf. 2.8). One participant who had left the university commented about the teaching resources at NUL and of the university that he is working at currently:

My new employer provides unlimited internet facilities, a new laptop that allows me to even do my work at home. There are projectors in the lecture halls that make teaching easier with slides and smart boards than writing on the white board. At my previous institution, I used a desktop, which forced me to use my own laptop after work to do university work (Participant L1).

The response suggested that talented academics could be pushed to move to organisations that provided adequate job resources that made work easier. Findings indicated that in this era of e-learning, internet was an imperative tool for talented academics in their working space especially in their research work. Participants suggested that provision of laptops to talented academics would help to increase retention of talented academics and reduce use of personal facilities to carry out university work. This implies that when talented academics have sufficient resources, it increases motivation and helps them to find fulfilment in their work. The data from participants suggested that teaching of both sciences and social sciences in under equipped laboratories posed a major challenge to achievement of effective teaching and learning and hindered achievement of intended goals.

4.7.4 Nature of Work / Challenging Work

A common factor that impacted on TM, according to Paauwe (2009:339), is that employees attach value to meaningful, challenging work, in addition to growth needs and social needs (meaningful relationships and interactions with co-workers). These are embedded as non-economic value of TM practices and policies to individual talents (cf. 2.6). All the participants interviewed who were currently at NUL and those who had left agreed that their work was not challenging to the level of their intellectual ability. All of them indicated that they had been teaching undergraduate programmes the greater part of their working experience at NUL. One professor commented:

> *My work is not challenging at all since I have been teaching undergraduates year in and year out. I only started to feel a bit of a challenge a year ago when I started teaching postgraduate students* (Participant E1).

Another participant commenting on the level of challenge of his work said:

> *When I discovered that, my work was not challenging me to grow academically for the past 10 years that I have been teaching undergraduates, I then had to look for opportunities in other universities to supervise Masters and PhD students. I am an external examiner in other universities. This has given me experience and challenged me to grow academically and to give life to my resume* (Participant C6)*.*

One professor indicated that*:*

> *My work started to be challenging a few months ago when I was assigned to develop modules for postgraduate programme but otherwise my work is monotonous because it is not mentally challenging* (Participant C3).

On the contrary, one participant explained that he felt overwhelmed by the introduction of postgraduate programmes:

> *I feel that my work is very challenging and overwhelming because postgraduate programmes were discontinued for a long time and since then, I have been teaching undergraduates; and with the reintroduction of higher degrees, it is not easy. I am now overloaded. Writing modules and*

supervision of higher degrees is most challenging. I need tutors and assistant lecturers (Participant C5).

One professor commenting on the nature of his work suggested:

As senior academics, mentoring junior academics would be more challenging and empowering to us. That is the only challenging part of my job. I am excited that at the university that I am going to join, I will be teaching and supervising higher degrees, that is, masters and PhD students (Participant E3)*.*

Another participant lamented on the challenge that teaching of postgraduate programmes was bringing to his workload*:*

*Because my work was for many years not challenging, with my workload only being undergraduates, I had all the time to do my research, publish, and grow my CV profile by attending conferences. Now time will be limited because of the re-introduction of postgraduate programmes (*Participant C4).

The above responses indicated that talented academics were motivated by meaningful and challenging work since some of them even went to the extent of looking for challenging work of supervising higher degrees in other universities (cf. 2.7.3). Most academics felt their competence was underutilised by teaching undergraduates with no supervision of higher degrees, which they regarded as more challenging. For some, there was a feeling of frustration, especially those who were still at the university because some were continuing to teach undergraduates. However, from the responses there was a bit of relief for those who were exiting since most of them indicated that they were going to be involved in higher degrees teaching and supervision. From the comments, it seems most talented academics were expecting to teach and supervise higher degrees to increase the level of challenge in their work and increase value to their resumes. Senior participants perceived the teaching of undergraduate programmes as more appropriate work for young and upcoming academics. NUL National Strategic Plan (2017-2020:5) highlights that the university has very few postgraduate programmes that most talented academics may not find challenging enough (cf. 2.8). Some of the participants indicated that less challenging work could result in talented academics turning elsewhere to create challenging work

or quitting the organisation in search of full utilisation of their competences. From the data, it was proposed that the university management should be cognisant of the fact that talented academics are increasingly becoming more interested in challenging and meaningful work, if the university is to increase retention.

4.8 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

With regard to the conceptualisation of the meaning of talent, there were several definitions given by respondents. From the definitions, there came components with regards to abilities, performance. Some of the characteristics of talent were perceived to be influenced by the context in which the talent was found. Mostly mentioned characteristic of a talent was the developmental level and process that talent undergoes, which affected the operationalisation of the talent. This referred to the position that talent holds in a particular organisation like a university. There was not much information on the concept of talent management; however, insight was shaded on what academics expect from talent management as they put forward different practices. The limited information on the concept of TM could have been based on the fact that NUL does not have an official TM programme and participants were more informed of HR concepts as opposed to TM practices.

From the data derived from interviews, the respondents pointed out key denominators that influenced the implementation of talent management in order to retain academics at NUL. Most participants perceived the issue of equity in term of salaries and distribution of research funds. Participants perceived a disequilibrium in their salaries and other incentives like bonuses in comparison with other universities in the region and abroad. The discontent could be perceived by academics as a lack of appreciation from the management. However, management was struggling to work with the continuous reduction of government subventions taking place on a yearly basis. The desire to correct the inequity motivated talented academics to seek for better opportunities in other universities outside the country or join other public or private organisations where they perceived an appreciation of their cultural capital in an economic manner. From the data, it was not every academic's view to quit the organisation because of insufficient compensation, as some academics chose to stay

because of family responsibilities and loyalty, and sought other avenues to increase their income (cf. 2.3 and 4.4.5).

According to Bourdieu (1989:16), employees are placed in a specific position in an organisation according to their cultural capital possession (competencies and dispositions) (cf. 2.2.2). This categorisation was a concern for talented academics in relation to the distribution of research fund, which was suggested, should be distributed according to seniority of competence and research ability. The role of the government in funding the university affected TM and retention at NUL. It seems the low autonomy of the university was a major drawback in the effort of the university to retain its talented employees. Most participants suggested that the government should increase the subventions to allow improved productivity and smooth operation of the institution. In addition, government could give the university greater autonomy to source funding outside of the government and authorise the university to charge economic tuition fees that would possibly assist in the increase of their salaries, research funds and improve their working conditions (cf. 4.6.1 and 4.6.2). This implies that the restriction of autonomy resulted in loss of talented academics and deterioration of working conditions. However, apart from political reasons as stated by some participants on the issue of autonomy, the government could require accountability in the use of resources and demand a certain level of quality academic work from the university in exchange for autonomy.

4.9 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to uncover the views on talent management of both management and talented academics at NUL, towards retention of highly talented academics. In an effort to accomplish this, the data collected from semi-structured interviews was interpreted and linked with various constructs that emerged from the data generation process. The various themes that emerged assisted to bring out an understanding of talent management and retention strategies at NUL. The findings pointed to talent management being, not only the responsibility of human resource office, but also of the government, university management, leaders in faculties and departments, and also of the talented academics. This ultimately calls for all the stakeholders to have open and continuous communication in terms of talent

management policies and practices that impact on retention of talented academics. Both management and talent presented different suggestions of which, if taken into consideration, result in improvement in talent management practices and increased retention of talented academics.

In the next chapter, I present the suggested talent management practices and retention strategies that were uncovered in this chapter and draw conclusions and offer recommendations on the issue of talent management of academics in order to increase retention of talented academics at NUL.

CHAPTER 5:

COMMENTS, IMPLICATIONS AND REFLECTION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the discussion of the themes that emerged from the study, which explored the issues of talent management in retention of academics at NUL. A brief background to the study is presented, followed by the theoretical and conceptual framework, and then the problem statement, as a reminder of where the study originated. In the chapter, focus is on the main themes that emerged from the literature review and the empirical data in an effort to answer the research questions from Chapter 1 of the study. The chapter presents critical comments and suggests areas for further research in talent management as a means to address retention issues in universities. It also highlights limitations of the study. In the following section, an overview of chapter coherence is done.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER COHERENCE

The primary step towards answering my research question was to present the key theories informing the study, which are Armstrong's equity theory and Bourdieu's cultural theory. Bourdieu's theory was applied to gain understanding on how the production of cultural, social and economic capital in the context of talent management assisted in increasing retention in universities (cf. 2.2.2). Insights drawn from Adam's equity theory and Bourdieu's cultural theory enabled a reflection on talent management practices employed to retain talented academics at NUL. According to Armstrong (2009:328), equity theory states that individuals compare their job inputs (physical and mental) to their outputs (rewards and recognition) with those internal and external, and then respond to eliminate any equalities by, at times, leaving the organisation (cf. 1.3). In order to increase retention of highly talented academics, outputs or rewards should be perceived to be in equilibrium after comparing differences and similarities with other similar higher education institutions or even the private sector for similar jobs. Bourdieu's social theory was discussed to allow for the

understanding of various kinds of capital which academics possess. These accumulated capitals of the academics were seen as talent. The two theories of equity and cultural theory speak to each other in the sense of that there should be perceived equity between talent's cultural capital and the output, which is economic and social capital in form of remuneration and recognition in order to increase retention. If there is perceived disequilibrium on the cultural capital and the output, then there is likelihood of high mobility of talent or reduction of effort in the work input (cf. 2.2.1 and 2.2.2). The theoretical framework explained how a perceived misalignment between the capital and talent possesses and the rewards received could adversely affect the talent's decision to stay or leave the organisation.

The insights of these theories enabled me to engage in the next chapter where I explored the available literature on talent management practices and retention strategies meant to increase talent retention. In the literature review chapter, the aim was to clarify the concept of talent management and how different sectors of the economy implemented the concept to gain competitive advantage. Of importance was revealing the factors that affect effective implementation of talent management in the context of higher education, in order to retain the highly talented academics. The main criticism for talent management revealed was that the concept of talent management is more established in the business world where the context and characteristics differ from those of public institutions like universities. In spite of the fact that talent management has been effective in improving retention in organisations, another criticism was that talent management took a more management perspective at the expense of other key stakeholders like employees and the society (cf. 2.5).

Taking into account that talent management carries a greater management perspective and a top-down approach, I described and justified the data generation or method that I used in my methodology chapter. Employing a qualitative research design and interpretive approach, I explained how I used the semi-structured interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of the views and perceptions of both academics and management on issues of talent management in order to retain talent at NUL (cf. 3.3).

After taking into account the context of NUL as a case study of practices of talent management towards retention, chapter 4 provided a discussion of findings from data that was generated through document analysis and semi structured interviews. In this chapter, I focused on talent management practices that could be integrated with the cultural capital of talent in order to increase retention and give the university a competitive advantage (cf. 4.2). The data revealed various contextual talent management practices that both the management and academics, with the input of the government, can adopt and improve the retention rate at NUL.

The diagram below summarises how the literature aligned with the theoretical framework and the aim of the study in order to increase retention in universities.
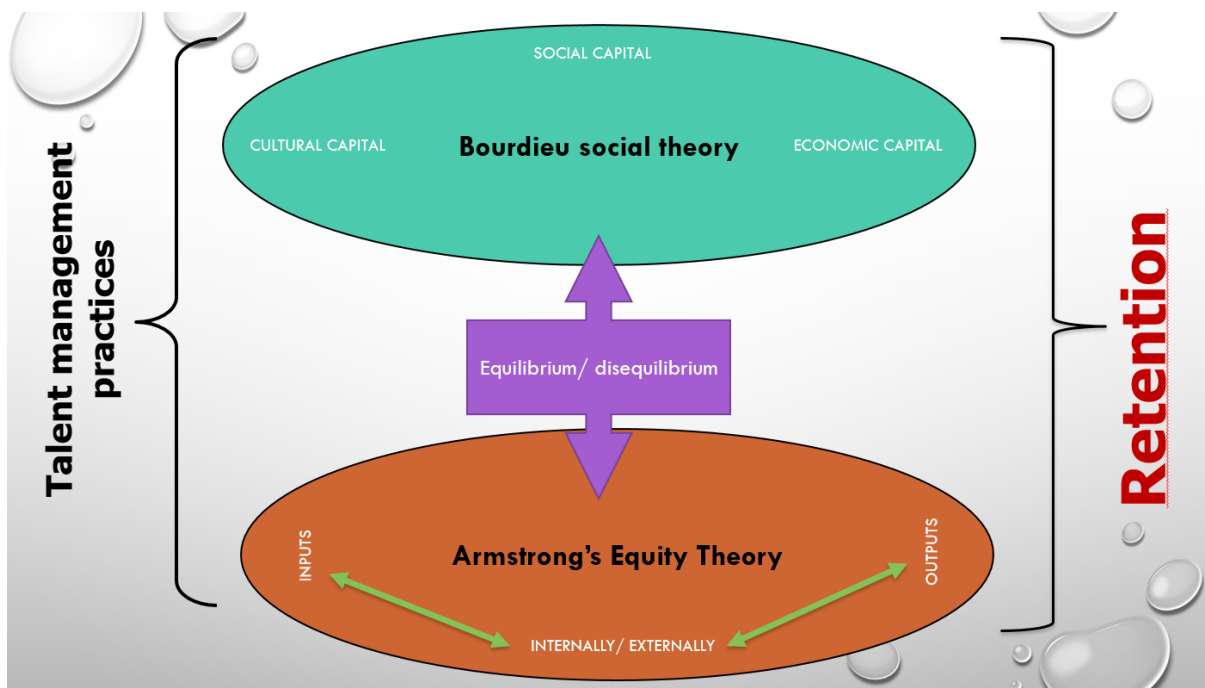

Figure 11: *Alignment of literature, theory and aim of study.*

As depicted by figure 12 above, talent management practices should be designed and implemented in a manner that is perceived to bring equilibrium between talent's cultural capital and the rewards (social and economic capital), in order to increase retention of academics in universities. A sense of disequilibrium in the implementation of talent management practices in relation to talent capitals and outputs results in adverse effects on retention. Drawing from the findings, talent management practices

should address the cultural capital, social capital and economic capital of the talent. In view of this, talent may perceive equilibrium or disequilibrium according to Armstrong's equity theory, when they internally and externally compare their inputs (cultural capital), with their output (economic capital and social capital) which constitute their symbolic capital. Perceived equilibrium results in talent having no intention and motivation to leave the organisation and the TM practices would have effectively increased retention. However, if there is perceived disequilibrium in the economic and social capitals, employees take action to correct the disequilibrium. The actions could include leaving the organisation for places where they perceive existence of equilibrium. It may also lead to reduction of input. In this regard, the diagram shows how the theoretical framework speaks to the talent management practices that universities can adopt and how theoretical framework speaks to the aim of the study of employing effective talent management practices to increase retention.

5.3 COMMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS

The main aim of the study was to investigate the contribution of talent management practices at NUL in the retention of talented academics. In order to answer the research question, I drew from various chapters of the thesis and centred my discussion on the following three themes that have a bearing on how talent management could be employed in universities in order to improve academic retention:

- Embracing talent and talent management at the university
- strengthening career development of talent / Increasing the support of talent
- Governance and autonomy of the university (cf. 4.2)

The themes are a discussion on how the research questions could be answered through the data and the theory, and suggestions on how to answer the main research question on how talent management practices could be employed to increase retention of talent.

5.3.1 Embracing Talent Management at the University

Data revealed that NUL academics and management have an understanding of the meaning of talent as an academic with high skills and sound knowledge and proven expertise and well published in their field of study. In the absence of an official talent management programme at NUL, there was limited information on the understanding of the concept talent management from both academics and management, though academics identified themselves as talent.

Talent was defined from two approaches. The inclusive approach included every employee who had skills and ability to perform their job. The exclusive approach included only academic with exceptional skills and hold the highest qualifications who are PhD holders, associate professors and professors who give the university a brand name and a competitive advantage (cf. 2.5 and 4.4.1). These were academics whose cultural capital, according to Bourdieu (1984:127) merited talent appreciation and recognition in their specific fields of study (cf. 2.2.2). From participants' responses, it emerged that talent was one who exceled in the triple mandate of the university of teaching, research and community engagement. It was also clear from participants that talent was the most valuable asset and resource at NUL, worth retaining for the benefits of both the organisation and the individual talent.

Participants perceived talent management as synonymous with human resources management, and most of the participants used these words interchangeably. Despite the evidence that the NUL has no official talent management program or office that is responsible for talent management, it is implementing talent management practices though in an unstructured manner (cf. 4.4.2). This resulted in most participants not being familiar with the concept of talent management. Management represented by HR office understood talent management to be a collective of all the HR activities directed to all employees and not to a particular sector of employees. Data revealed that TM was understood to be more of a European corporate concept, which is not so prevalent in the African context, especially in the higher education sector (cf. 4.3.2). However, from the data, talent management was applicable in the African context if the university management developed a talent mind-set and made a commitment to

invest in practices that increased retention. The talent management practices could be tailored in consultation with talent, to suit the needs and preferences of talent in the context of NUL and higher education regionally. Context based talent management practices, which are exclusive to talent, assist to retain talented academics in universities.

Based on the different definitions of talent, most participants (lecturers with PhDs, associate professors and professors) identified themselves as talent worth retaining using structured talent management practices. According to Bourdieu's cultural capital theory, the recognition and stratification of academics seeks to identify and acknowledge talent from the rest of the academics (cf. 2.2.2 and 4.4.3). Hence the need to have a TM programme specific to each strata of academics. The data indicated that it is the responsibility of HR office and senior management to initiate TM at NUL, with the assistance of deans and heads of department in order to increase the retention of talent and create a brand name for the university.

Most participants confirmed that they viewed themselves as talent that gave the university a brand name and competitive advantage. They substantiated their claims based on the publications they had done, the conferences they had attended and the nature of consultancy they did representing the university, and more importantly the calibre of students they graduate (cf. 4.4.3). It was revealed from the data that some academics believed that they are talent because of the cultural capital they hold, consultancy projects they run and the number of publications they have which made them to standout above other academics (cf. 2.2.2). For some academics, the positions that they held at the university were manifest that they were talent and a valuable asset to the university. Management also concurred with the views of academics that they could be categorised as talent worth of retaining in order to be able to offer better quality programmes at the university.

Based on that account, it was recommended that the university consider establishing a formal talent management programme where different talent management practices are applied to different categories of academics depending on their career stage, cultural capital and positions they hold in the organisation. For talented academics, the TM practices needed to be exclusive and more personalised in order to meet the

needs of this category of academics who are the think tanks of the university. Currently, it seems as though neither HR nor senior management at the university was responsible for talent management. Therefore, HR needed to put in place and own professional talent management programmes in consultation with the talented academics. This would assist to differentiate TM needs depending on the different career levels, individual needs and readiness.

Since talent is a multidimensional construct, the TM practices at NUL needed to be initiated to address the social, educational, economic and cultural capital of the talented academics in an equitable manner in order to increase retention and gain a competitive advantage. Issues of TM could be discussed with enough representation of talent and priority. University management needed to be accountable for talent management, in order to eventually help in ensuring increased retention.

5.3.2. Increasing Career Development of Talent in the University.

The empirical data indicated that the following talent management practices are being implemented at NUL in an endeavour to retain talent: recruitment and selection, training and development, promotion, compensation, communication, research and publication and community engagement (cf. 4.5). The talent management approach at NUL was two-dimensional; both inclusive and exclusive, depending on the career stage of the talent involved. For talented academics, there seemed to be an exclusive approach through practices like compensation though on most of the practices an inclusive approach was employed which included every other academic.

The findings suggest that despite working under a constrained budget, NUL financially supports its academics to carry out their research work and attend national and international conferences. However, most of the participants felt the support was not adequate. Participants highlighted that the university was working on a low budget and insufficient funds were allocated to research, publications and conferences. Suggestions from academics were that allocation and distribution of the research grants should be based on the level of career development of each category of employees (cf. 4.5.1 and 2.2.2). It was found that research and publication

opportunities are important to the career development of talented academics as a main pointer towards promotion of academics. Research networking and conferences affords the talented academics opportunity to network with other academics in their fields of expertise. From the findings, it was clear that research and publication was a key aspect of the work of talented academics. At NUL participants expressed that the funding for research work was inadequate and it was imperative for the university budget to make funding for research and publication a priority. University management could involve talent in the review and allocation of research grants and this would assist talent in developing their own innovative research lines. Importantly, research funds could be allocated according to seniority, and academics with large research outputs could be allocated more and avoid a homogeneous allocation for every academic (cf. 4.4.5). In addition to increasing the annual individual allowance for research and publication, the university could give an incentive for each publication. Research policy could include a clause that all unclaimed research funds should be given to those who are willing to do research. Alternatively, research funds unclaimed in a certain number of years should not be allocated to those who have not claimed. Another suggestion is that research funds could be allocated on demand bases. When talent perceives commitment by management towards their career development, it reduces talent's motivation and intention to leave the university.

Data reveals that NUL availed opportunities to academics to do external consultancy and projects which the university claims 40% of the profits and the respective academic gets 60%, (cf. 4.5.1.2). This applies to instances where talent had disclosed the project and are using the resources of the university. Most participants lamented that the 40 percentage of the profits that the university was claiming was too high since all successful external projects were done as a way of marketing the university by academics. There was a shared sentiment from management and talent that there was need to review the profit sharing ratio in consultation with both parties. The idea was applauded as noble because it was one way for the university to raise extra funds and a means for academics to supplement their incomes. Some participants viewed external consultancy as community service that benefited both the university and the community. The university could consider reducing the profit percentage from 40% downwards in consultation with talent to encourage academics to disclose projects that are done using university resources. The opportunity for talent to raise extra

income does not only increase loyalty but it encourages talent to disclose their projects and consultancy to the benefit of both parties.

One of the talent management practices that increases retention of academics is careful recruitment of talent with organisational fit. From the responses, recruitment of talented academics has not been an easy process at NUL because of the current financial position. Participants revealed that the university has four basic procedures in its recruitment process, which are, advertising, selecting, shortlisting and appointment. Interviews as an important process for recruitment is not normally done except for high-ranking positions due to the constrained budget, (cf. 4.4.2 and 2.7.1). The data reveals that the university has a challenge in recruiting highly skilled academics, (doctorates, associate professors and professors) due to competition in the labour market and other working conditions. Participants indicated that talented academics were available on the labour market but at an exorbitant price that the university could not afford which leaves the university with one choice to recruit junior academics with less experience (cf. 4.4.2).

It is imperative to conduct interviews for all posts, especially academic posts, to validate candidates' resumes and to establish job and organisational fit of the candidate. The interview process helps to establish the adaptability of the candidate to the environment and reduces turnover when applicants accept the job offer and later discover the environment is not what they expected. In this regard, NUL could ensure that procedures and processes employed during recruitment meet the needs and expectations of both the organisation and of talent, in order to increase the attractiveness of the university as an employer of choice

The importance of training and development of talent is to enhance performance in the current position one holds and to increase expertise in one's field of study. Data showed that NUL has used training and development for decades as a process of improving the skills and knowledge of academics through the Lesotho Board for Basotho (LTB) of 1977 (cf. 4.5.3). The LTB programme only targets Basotho academics and excludes academics at the university who are expatriates. Some participants raised the issues of equity against the LTB programme as it discriminates against expatriates despite them being university employees. Data showed that the

LTB programme had developed many local academics but the system had failed to retain most of them as Basotho academics were leaving the university in large numbers (cf. 4.5). It can be suggested that talent management initiatives could be put in place in order to have rate of returns from LTB and avoid training for other organisations. As revealed by the data, training and development was mainly focusing on achievement of qualifications (masters and PhDs) and not much was invested in professional development of talented academics (doctorates, associate professors and professors) as the system assumed that they had already achieved. In this regard, it was suggested that the university design a parallel training and development programme that is more inclusive, focusing on issues like developing research skills, designing postgraduate programmes, sourcing scholarships, conducting fund raising projects, developing supervision skills, and mentorship. This would increase the rate of staff retention and create an opportunity for lifelong learning for talented academics (cf. 4.4.3).

The perceived inequitable and unfair treatment of expatriate academics in terms of opportunities for training and development was one factor that had an adverse effect on retention of talented expatriates. It was suggested that the LTB policy be reviewed and updated in terms of opportunities for training and development to be more inclusive and to make provision for professional development to meet the needs of all academics at the university.

As a measure for increasing retention, the promotional criteria at NUL from one level to another had been relaxed to allow more academics to move up their career ladder. The current situation was that associate professorship could be awarded after 7 years of service along with other requirements and not 12 years as it was previously. (cf. 4.5.4). Some of the participants perceived the promotional criteria to be vaguely stated in the university's promotion guidelines and not reflecting equity amongst all academics in the university; and felt the new changes in the promotion policy were in favour of a certain group of employees. From the data generated, few of the participants were not satisfied with the promotion process which came out as one of the reasons that made them quit the organisation for better opportunities (cf. 4.5.4). Opportunities for growth through promotion were perceived as a form of recognition and were key to talent retention (cf. 4.4.5). In this regard, it was imperative to have a clear comprehensive promotional policy and guidelines applied in a fair and consistent

manner to avoid inconsistencies, which led to discontentment and high turnover among talent.

In this study, it was found that a whole spectrum of retention practices was centred on compensation. At the centre of any employment contract is compensation which talent management has to address in order to increase retention (cf. 2.3). The data suggested that talented academics at NUL felt they were not adequately compensated. The main reason highlighted was that NUL received a low budget from the government since it was a state university. Some participants indicated that they had other means of supplementing their income through consultancy work and external projects where they got 60% of the proceeds and 40% went to the university coffers (cf. 4.5.5). Responses from participants indicated that some academics were exiting the organisation because they were searching for better compensation commensurate with their experience and worth (cultural capital). It was therefore, suggested that the university and government consider reviewing salaries, which were eroded by inflation, in order to increase talent retention. Findings revealed that the university did not have bonuses which most of the participants indicated as an imperative way of showing appreciation for talent's efforts. Generally, most participants felt they were inadequately compensated at the level of their cultural capital and the going market rates, and perceived a disequilibrium in their compensation compared to that of their colleagues in other universities and in the private sector (cf. 4.5.5).

Drawing from the importance of compensation, it could be suggested that NUL should redesign the compensation structure to suit the market going rates to avoid continuous turnover from talented academics. This will assist the university to ensure that salaries are internally equitable and externally competitive. Salaries commensurate to competencies, skills and expectations of talented academics could yield positive results on talent recruitment and increase talent retention. Though the data indicated that the current budget of the university was overstretched, the university could engage talent management to enable segmentation of employees and invest differently in the niche group of employees who gave the university a brand name (cf.4.5.5 and 2.3). The university could seek greater autonomy from the government

to explore alternative ways to raise more income in order to be able to compensate talented academics at the going market rates.

In this study, it was found that communication is one of the key TM practices that assist in retaining talent (cf. 4.5.6). In talent management, communication is imperative to initiate and put forward vision and mission of the organisation and set expectations for what will happen in the organisation. There was unanimous acknowledgment that the current leadership was effectively communicating the university vision to the employees. However, there were indications that more needed to be done since some policies were not clear and communication assisted to get the buy in of talent in the implementation and execution of the policies. It was suggested that talented academics be fully involved in the formulation or review of policies. Data highlighted that there was often poor internet connection and traditional ways of communicating through memos and messengers were in use (cf. 4.4.6). It is imperative to invest in better internet connections in order to improve electronic communication and ensure constant meetings to follow up on issues (cf.2.73 and 4.4.6). Feedback and input from talent should be considered in order to reduce resistance and resentment from talented academics. Organisational loyalty and retention is increased when the communication process is transparent and continuous, and when no one feels left out.

The study proposes that TM strategies at NUL be tailor-made to suit a group of talented academics to promote learning and growth of talent in their careers. Recognition and strategic realignment of compensation, supported by open communication, is critical to increase talent retention and loyalty to the organisation. Review of certain organisational policies to suit the current context of the university, such as the LTB, profit sharing policy, and recruitment policy is relevant towards winning the war of talent.

5.3.2.1 Increasing Talent Support Towards Retention

Of paramount importance in talent management focus areas is retention of highly skilled employees who are pivotal in giving an organisation competitive advantage and a brand name. Data reveals that NUL has adopted the exclusive TM approach for retention of talented academics employees (PhD holders, associate professors and

professors) who are critical in driving the strategic objectives of the university for achieving competitive advantage. Retention allowance and extension of retirement age were the key strategies in operation to increase retention of talented academics (cf. 4.6). It was found that talented academics were offered an additional 10% of the basic salary as retention allowance on a monthly basis (cf. 4.6.1). While there was appreciation for the allowance, data indicates that the retention allowance (10% of basic salary) had been eroded by inflation because salaries had been stagnant for a long time (cf. 4.6.1). It was suggested that the 10% could be reviewed upwards in consultation with talent in order to maintain its relevance. Since the 10% allowance was homogeneous to all talented academics (PhD holders, associate professors and professors), the percentages could be differentiated according to each grade level. Such recognition could increase retention of talented academics.

It was found that talented academics at professor level and towards retirement age had an extension of the retirement age from 65 to 70 or 71 depending on individual strength (cf. 4.6.2 and 9.2). Participants highlighted extension of retirement age as a good retention strategy that gave them the opportunity to give NUL a competitive advantage through their experience in research and teaching, and opportunity to mentor junior academics (cf. 4.6.2). The data indicated that this retention strategy motivated talent who were in their middle fifties and above to stay with the organisation because of the advantage of late retirement. These retention strategies gave the university a good platform to provide successful TM to assist the university to compete in the academic arena. Talent management should focus on retention strategies for talented academics characterised by exclusivity from the rest of the academics.

5.3.3 Strengthening of Governance and Autonomy of the University

A number of factors can influence the success or failure of TM in an organisation. This theme focuses on the role of governance and autonomy as factors of talent management towards improving retention in universities.

From the data, it was found that NUL is a state funded university and the government of Lesotho is the major shareholder in the running of the university affairs. Most of the participants agreed that the university has low autonomy mainly on issues of finance

and decision-making (cf. 4.5.1). As a state funded university, NUL does not have alternative mechanisms of raising extra income despite being inadequately funded by the government. The government should consider granting a greater degree of autonomy to the university to source income from alternative sources to enable it to fully support its operations.

Drawing from the data, the government of Lesotho plays a significant role in ensuring sustainable talent retention at NUL. The government, as the sole financial source of the university, has been reducing the subventions on a yearly basis (cf. 4.5 and 2.8). Given the importance of higher education in research and its impact on the advancement of the economy, society and technology; government should make financial disbursement and budget for universities a priority. In this regard, it is suggested that, the government increase the subventions yearly based on the rate of inflation. The government could also introduce a skills development levy as a domestic tax revenue aimed at boosting university funding. For example, encourage collaboration between NUL and the corporate society in and outside of Lesotho, increase participation of social organisations and donors in assisting the university financially and in improving or maintaining the infrastructure. Blending internal fundraising options such as charging students economic fees and external alternative mechanisms of raising funds for the university could assist in improving retention and working conditions of talent (cf. 2.8 and 4.5). Increasing postgraduate programmes and short courses is another internal way of increasing income.

Data revealed that cutting down the financial support to the university on a yearly basis had an adverse effect on the salaries of academics, financial support on research output and maintenance of infrastructure and provision of teaching resources. It is suggested that, NUL could diversify income streams through grants and contracts, alumni contributions, consultancy projects with the government and private sector and financial aid from other governments globally. This would reduce dependence on public funds, which is influenced by political and economic factors of the government.

Partnerships with the corporate institutions could assist in supporting innovation and growth through research and equipping laboratories and upgrading of modern teaching resources such as smart boards and e-learning materials to promote effective teaching. However, increased autonomy of NUL requires the government to put

measures on accountability and transparency of the acquisition and utilisation of alternative incomes to the university.

The data indicated lack of autonomy in terms of employment contracts, especially for expatriates, that are governed by the labour laws of the country. The labour law stipulates hiring of expatriates on two–year contract with no guarantee of renewal, which has adverse implications on retention (cf. 4.4.2). The labour law on employment conditions of expatriates could be revised upwards from two to five years which gives to give talent an opportunity to stabilise in the organisation. Alternatively, the labour law could guarantee renewal of the two-year contract number of times as a measure to increase retention. Government could consider reviewing some of the labour laws or policies, which affect retention of talent at the university.

In this particular study, it was found that a conducive environment that is friendly is one talent management practice that yields positive effects in achieving talent retention. Participant responses highlighted that the physical environment (teaching halls and ablution blocks) was not always clean and that infrastructure and lighting was deteriorating due to lack of maintenance (cf. 4.7.1). It was suggested that attention be given to the physical working environment including office spaces to motivate talent achieve best results which give the university a competitive advantage.

The data from participants highlighted that the working relationship among academics impacted on whether some academics would stay or leave the organisation. It was indicated that negative work relationships among colleagues was affecting the functioning of some departments and even the teaching and learning process. Open communication and adequate involvement in decision making between talent and management promotes healthy working relationships in order to achieve individual and organisational goals. Retention is high where working relationships allow talent to express their ideas with no fear of judgement or prejudice.

The availability of teaching resources has a bearing on the quality of work of talent in a university set up. The high standards of work expected from academics may not be achievable with limited resources. It was suggested that the university invest modern technology like e-learning, use of projectors and smart boards, which are used in other universities (cf. 4.7.3). The data indicated that the science and language laboratories

were under-equipped, which frustrated talented academics as effective teaching was difficult. Investment in teaching and learning resources and upgrading of laboratories could assist in improving the quality of education programs (cf. 2.7.3 and 2.8).

Data revealed that for many years, NUL had been offering undergraduate programmes which were not intellectually challenging for most talented academics. There were indications from the data that some of the talented academics were leaving the university looking for opportunities to fully utilise their competences and grow academically (cf. 4.7.4 and 2.6). It was until the past two years that talented academics were involved in the teaching of postgraduate degrees in a few departments (cf. 4.7.4). It is imperative to offer talented academics an opportunity to grow their resumes and academic profiles through teaching and supervising higher degrees, sourcing of scholarships for higher degrees, and providing research funds and mentoring of junior academics to become highly skilled academics. Accomplishment of intellectually challenging work brings satisfaction, organisational loyalty and a sense of achievement to talent.

5.4 CONCLUSION OF THE THEMES

Consequently, understanding the meaning and value of TM, and acknowledgement that talent is the most valuable asset that gives an organisation a competitive advantage, is imperative in retaining talent. A correct balance of inputs and commitment from all stakeholders (management, talent and government) in the design and implementation of talent management yields positive results in increasing talent loyalty to the organisation. When talented academics find themselves operating within a social environment characterised by numerous, social, economic and political obstacles and interferences, they find viable strategies and methods to remedy the current situation. In most cases, they will decide to quit or exit environments with restricted academic freedom. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that all the talent management practices aim to address the needs and preferences of talent, individually and collectively in order to achieve both individual and organisational goals.

5.5 IN REFLECTION

Generally, the undertaking of any research study is fraught with challenges and limitations, and the present study was no exception. However, I put much effort to conduct my research in a well-planned and organised manner according to the ethical principles of research. There were limitations of the study, which opened new opportunities for research. Some of the challenges such as logistical matters during data generation assisted me to be creative in order overcome and address them. During the undertaking of this study, I experienced the following limitations and shortcomings:

- The first issue was obtaining timeous consent from the university. Though I had applied for consent well in advance, I could not get the response from the university management as planned. There were delays in getting approval for me to collect data from lecturers according to my schedule.

- Another limitation was the unavailability of participants since it was during the semester and most of the participants were conducting lectures. This resulted in a lot of waiting until the respective lecturers were available as interviews were for a specific category of lecturers.

- One of the major challenges was having some of my participants not very familiar with the field of talent management so I was taking time to explain what talent management is in the context of higher education. However, after explaining, the responses were satisfactory.

- Since data generation was done during the semester, it was also a challenge to get appointments with the management because of their busy work schedules. Some interviews were done after working hours. Some of the management participants would agree to the interviews at an appointed time, then later cancel, and make new appointments.

- The National University of Lesotho was the only university, which was used as a case study to conduct the study.

5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In this research, I focused on the perspectives of talented academics and management on the impact of talent management in retention of academics at NUL. A suggestion for further research will be focusing on getting the views and perspectives of the government as the main stakeholder and financial provider so that the government can define its role in talent management at NUL. It is imperative to have the perspective of government as the regulator of labour laws which influence talent management and retention at NUL. The research focus could be extended by integrating the views of the university council members and the senate. In this study, the focus was mainly on retention, but further research could be undertaken on how the following factors affect talent management: succession planning, employee commitment, and mentoring to assess the effectiveness of talent retention in institutions of higher education in Lesotho and other countries.

Further research could also be done on how talent management influences knowledge capacity building in universities by applying an inclusive approach, where every employee is viewed as talent. This would include the support staff and their role towards the institution's attainment of competitive advantage in the academic arena. While in this study only the symbolic capital (economic, social and cultural capitals) was the main theoretical framework informing the study, further studies can explore Bourdieu's theory on Field Habitus in relation to talent management in universities. Further studies may also have to take a triangulation approach to data generation on talent management. The data can be generated from all stakeholders, for example, management/ HR, employees as the talent, government, society, students and indirect members who are also affected by talent management practices implemented by the university.

The economic and non-economic value of TM at societal level could be researched, especially how universities consider societal well-being in their TM policy and practices. Further research could endeavour to understand the roles and the influence of various stakeholders beyond management and HR on TM policy and practice in order to advance TM as a field of academic study, and enhance how HR and management handle TM issues faced by organisations like universities.

5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The main aim of the study was to investigate the contribution of talent management practices at NUL in the retention of talented academics in order for the university to gain a competitive advantage. In order to answer the research questions, each chapter unfolded interconnecting with the subsequent chapter. The literature study was done (cf. chapter 2) to investigate the available talent management practices that NUL can engage in order to increase retention. The chapter also discussed how Bourdieu's cultural theory and Adam's equity theory could be applied in talent management to increase retention. A case study approach to inquiry (cf. 1.6) was used to gain greater insight and understanding on the dynamics of talent management and retention of academics in a competitive environment. The data was generated through semi-structured interviews with NUL management representatives and lecturers (PhD holders, associate professors and professors) who were currently at the university and those who had already left the university. The interviews intended to gather qualitative data on the definition of talent and talent management, available talent management practices, and factors affecting the implementation of talent management in order to increase retention at NUL. The rationale for soliciting the views of talented academics was that literature on talent management has taken a more management perspective at the expense of other key stakeholders like employees. Management and HR have always been the generally targeted research population in the current TM research.

Although there is a considerable number of publications on talent and talent management, the literature has more dominance on the private sector and not much has been researched in higher education or universities (cf.1.1). Hence, this study sought to integrate both the management and employees' perspectives on talent management practices in universities in an endeavour to retain talented academics for institutions to gain competitive advantage. From the findings, it emerged that NUL had no official TM programme but was implementing practical TM practices that were essential in increasing retention of talented academics. However, other factors like the role of the government, insufficient funding and other work-related factors needed to be addressed in order to improve the current situation.

Recommendations were based on concerns and suggestions presented from the empirical data on the most suitable talent management practices and retention strategies applicable in the context of NUL. By suggesting the various ways of talent management practices at NUL, it remains imperative that NUL considers establishing a formal talent management programme in consultation with all stakeholders (a holistic approach). The inputs of management team, individual talent, government and society as key stakeholders in the designing and implementation of TM practices is of high importance. In conclusion, from the above study, it is clear that talent management at NUL was significant in the identification of talent, training and development, compensation and retention of talent; giving the university a competitive advantage and a brand name in the academic arena. Effective implementation of talent management at NUL will lead to the growth and development of both the university and the individual talent. In this global competition for the best talent, NUL management and the government of Lesotho should devote more time and resources to talent management and adopt TM best practices in order to retain the best academics who give the institution a competitive advantage in the higher education arena.

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ADDENDA

ADDENDUM A: INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS

The research objectives of my study have greatly inspired my research questions and informed the interview questions. Following Creswell's (2013:164) advice, questions are formulated from the broad research questions of the study in order to have a clear understanding of the impact of talent management in the retention of talented academics in universities.

(a)   Interview questions for management of NUL

Opening questions are for self-introduction, designation, length of time as an employee at management level at NUL and role in management.

1. Do you know which employees are contributing the most toward achieving your strategic goals?
2. Who is regarded as talent at NUL?
3. Does the university have a formally accepted definition of talent?
4. What is your personal definition of a talented academic?
5. What criterion is used to identify talent at the university?
6. Does the university have a formal TM programme for the management of its talented employees?
7. What are the retention practices and policies that the university has developed in order to curtail /curb talent mobility in terms of recruitment and selection, development, performance, retention and exit?
8. Which talent management strategies do you think work well for your organisation?
9. Does your top talent know how critical they are for the success of the university?
10. What are the challenges you face in trying to retain the best talent? How do you plan or intend to overcome them?
11. Does the university have difficulties in attracting talented academics? What could be the possible causes?
12. Do you compensate or reward the best talent in your institutions differently?
13. What criteria do you use to compensate or reward the best talent from the rest?
14. What are the challenges regarding TM implementation processes that the university is facing?

15. Does the government play a role in supporting talent management at NUL?

16. What TM practices and activities have been implemented by the university?

17. What are you going to do immediately to mitigate effects of uncertainty on your talent's morale or mobility?

18. With your current reward policy, are you able to attract the best talent on the labour market at the current market rates?

19. Are you optimising and developing the talent that you have?

20. Which academic positions do you find most difficult to fill up?

(b)   Interview questions for talented academics currently at NUL

1. Opening questions are for self-introduction, qualifications held and designation, length of time as an employee at NUL, and total work experience.

2. What is your personal understanding of a talented academic in the university context?

3. Do you think the university views you as a talented employee?

4. Do you identify yourself as talented employees?

5. How has the university supported your professional development? (in terms of research and career development) How do you think the university can improve?

6. Do you think that your job is challenging enough for the level of your competency?

7. Which programmes do you teach and for how long?

8. What TM activities or practices has the university implemented in an effort to retain talented employees?

9. Has the university compensated you in a way that is commensurate to your level of talent and at the going market rate of highly talented employees of your calibre?

10. In your opinion, what measures do you think the university has put in place to retain talented academics individually and collectively?

11. What happens if your needs and expectations as a talented employee are not met?

12. What do you think should be included in the TM program of the university to meet the needs and expectations of talented employees?

(c) Interview questions for those who have left NUL

Opening questions are for self-introduction, qualifications held and designation, length of time as an employee at NUL, current employer and current position.

1. Do you regard yourself as talented?

2. What is your understanding of a talented academic in the university context?

3. What were the reasons for your departure from NUL?

4. What TM practices, if put in place, would have made you stay at NUL?

5. How did NUL contribute to your professional development?

6. What opportunities were availed to you in terms of research and development?

7. How did both your department and management handle your exit process?

8. If you were to come back to NUL, what are the needs and expectations that you think should be in place?

9. What do you think should be included in the TM programme of NUL to meet the needs and expectations of talented employees who are there now?

10. What are the factors that attracted you to the organisation where you are now?

ADDENDUM B:

PERMISSION FROM NUL TO DO RESEARCH

THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LESOTHO

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Website http://www.nul.ls

PO Roma 180,
Lesotho.
Africa.

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

26th November 2018

REF: REG/ADM-1.37
LML/hyml

Ms. Theressa M. Zengeya
University of Free State
P.O. Box 339
Bloemfontein, 9300
South Africa

Dear Ms Zengeya

Re: **Request to research at the National University of Lesotho**

The National University of Lesotho (NUL) is in receipt of your application to do a research at this institution.

After careful consideration of all relevant facts, the University has agreed to allow you to continue with your research as requested. It is hoped that the research outcome will be beneficial to both the institution of Higher learning and the country at large.

By copy of this letter the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Director, Human Resources, NUL Professors and Doctorate holders are requested to assist you to carry out your assignment.

Yours sincerely

L. Maqalika-Lerotholi
Registrar

Cc: Vice-Chancellor
Pro-Vice-Chancellor
Director, Human Resources
NUL Professors
Doctorate holders

ADDENDUM C:

ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Faculty of Education

23-Aug-2018

Dear Ms Theressa Zengeya

Ethics Clearance: **Considerations of talent management in retention of academics: the case of National University of Lesotho.**

Principal Investigator: **Ms Theressa Zengeya**

Department: **School of Education Studies Department (Bloemfontein Campus)**

APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to you application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: **UFS-HSD2018/0159**

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully

Prof. MM Mokhele Makgalwa
Chairperson: Ethics Committee

Education Ethics Committee
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CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I agree to the recording of the *insert specific data collection method.*

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): _____