

## Talent Management: Malaysian Public Universities Vs Private Industries

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### ABSTRACT

*Talent management has been lauded by literature as an effective method for organisations to remain competitive and sustainable. This paper is a reflective study on talent management practices in private industries compared to the general norm in Malaysian Public Universities. Literature search for this paper found that in industries, talent management is an organisation-wide effort and has the full involvement of every level in the organisation. However, although Public Universities use talent management for capacity building, to retain and attract talents, the approach in public universities differ from industries. Talent management is found to work effectively and achieve expected results when carried out properly. There must be clarity of vision and strategic direction, recognition of what talent management deliverables are and periodic review and evaluation methods before effective implementation of talent management can be achieved.*

**Keywords:** Talent Management, Malaysian Public Universities, Industries, Talent Management Practices, Talent Management Framework.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Faced with a gamut of new challenges, Malaysian Public Universities are seriously doubting their leadership capabilities to successfully steer universities towards their strategic direction. Most Malaysian Public Universities are experiencing the challenging situation of dwindling supply of human resource with the required skillsets that are needed for universities to stay relevant, sustainable and competitive. As the world embarked on the new millennium in the year 2000, organisations public and private have been grappling to understand the complex interplay of factors affecting organisational talents, such as changing demographics, internationalisation, varying composition of workforce and the revolutionary needs of a younger group of talents.

Factoring in these new requirements in HR activities has caused organisations, including public universities, to take a step back and reconsider new ways to approach talent management. To move away from conventional practices dictated by industry best practices and benchmarking, towards more uncharted waters and a custom-made talent management program. Public universities in Malaysia are slowly but surely understanding the need for them to really understand the nature of their business, where their strategic direction is, what are the competencies and criteria needed in their workforce to enable the achievement of goals and objectives. Once they have identified the tasks that need to be carried out by their human resource, public universities then face the challenge of attracting and recruiting the required candidates, developing and shaping their human resource and ensuring their investments pay off and they are able to retain good people.

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Talent management is about the management of talents in an organisation with the intention of achieving organisational objectives and targets. In the area of managing talents, there has been an ongoing interest in how the public and private sectors differ in their implementation practices. This study focuses on how public institutions of higher learning in Malaysia manage talents compared to industries in general.

This paper is a reflective study on talent management based on the experience of the author working with and in Malaysian Public Universities compared to a literature review of practices in the private sector. It is the intent of this paper to highlight pertinent differences and best practices in talent management to be emulated and adapted by human resource practitioners to strategically achieve organisational goals.

## **2. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF STUDY**

Human resources or more recently referred to as talents have been regarded as an important asset for the success and sustainability of any organisation. Therefore, the management of talents, traditionally known as human resource management is an area which has and will continue to be given due consideration since the term talent management was first introduced.

Prior to the emergence of talent management, human resource management and development has been a routine exercise to fill vacancies in positions within Public Universities due to human resources leaving the organisation or as a result of an internal promotional process. Training and development programmes were usually developed with limited research into the actual needs of the organisation and seldom with a clear understanding of how the programmes will impact organisational direction and goals. To be fair to the HR professionals within the universities, they were often ill equipped with the required skills and knowledge to properly perform the technical necessities of conducting a training needs analysis (TNA) and a training needs identification (TNI) to strategically match HR policies to university strategic plans.

However, with new developments in the education industry and a shift in the governance structure, Public Universities in Malaysia have been involuntarily pushed out of their comfort zone. The Ministry of Education now play a minimal role in overseeing the running of the universities. The Board of Directors/Governors (BOD/G) has been accorded the role of being the main custodian of the universities. Accountabilities and responsibilities are within the university compounds with the Ministry looking from afar to ensure adherence to procedures and good governance practises. Accompanying this shift in accountabilities, the respective BOD/G's will now scrutinise every decision-making and financial implication to ensure they are in tandem with the strategic direction and objectives of the universities while remaining prudent financially.

Hence, this study is timely because of two main reasons, the first being that, human resource or talents are crucial for universities as an educational entity that deliver services to stakeholders and students. Secondly, to be financially viable and competitive, the optimisation of talents and to match a candidate to a specific job requirement is important. Universities must have talents whether academic or administrative and support with the correct skillsets for current and future developments. The main purpose of this organisational study is to examine trends, policies and best practices of talent management implemented in Malaysian Public Universities compared to the private sector. It is hoped that this study will elucidate new trends and emerging practices on talent management to be adopted and adapted by Malaysian public universities to remain relevant and competitive. It is also the intention of this study to propose a working framework to be considered by Malaysian Public Universities when drawing up their Talent Management Strategies.

This study is purely reflective in nature based on the author's experience and a review of current literature and practices. It is intended to depict:

1. The scope of talent management in private industries and Malaysian public universities
2. Current practices adopted by private industries and Malaysian public universities in managing talents
3. Emerging trends in talent management that Malaysian public universities may adopt to remain relevant
4. A suggested framework for the consideration of Malaysian Public Universities, developed from the author's review of literature.

### 3. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Extant literature reviewed for this paper showed that, the field of talent management covers a wide spectrum of HR functions. Its whole continuum includes planning, attracting, positioning and placement, training and developing, succession planning, performance management, compensation and benefits. This whole process of talent management is largely focused on developing a high performing workforce with the sole aim of retaining talents for the achievement of organisational goals (Kishor and Jha, 2012; Nancy, 2014; Syed Jamal Syed Abd Nasir, Roshidi Hassan, Roslani Embi, and Abdul Khabir Rahmat, 2012; Wright, 2003).

Syed Jamal *et al.* (2012) conducted a study on two large companies in Malaysia to compare talent management practices. In agreement with Kohinde (2012), the study by Syed Jamal *et al.* (2012) also revealed that large companies embark on talent management to cope with competition and challenges which require more erudite talents and new skillsets. Talent management is also important to identify potential leaders and groom them for better performance and equip them with skills needed in the future.

If talents are not managed well, industries and companies will experience a decline in productivity and effective deployment of other resources will be at stake. This has been proven by a study on retention issues which revealed that lack of satisfaction with the organisation's human resource plans, policies and poor working conditions are major reasons for employee attrition. Kishor and Jha (2012) in their study described the issues and causes related to attrition of employees and challenges in retaining talented employees. The authors discovered that employee turnover is a very serious problem and have proven to be detrimental to the organisation. Another study conducted by Kehinde (2012) in Nigeria found that although talent management is not easy to establish and implement, when conducted well, will reward companies with high productivity and excellent performance. Kohinde's (2012) study posits that, talent management provided good return especially for large and multi-national companies more than small companies. Kohinde (2012) goes on to suggest that talent management is a concept that has multiple perspectives. It has a process perspective where talent management is implemented at various stages in a spectrum of processes from recruitment through succession planning and career development and staff separation. It also has a cultural perspective where Talent Management is a mindset. It is how an organisation perceive its talents. Whether a talent is someone who just joined the organisation or whether a person is considered a talent after being with the organisation for some time (Kohinde, 2012; Syed Jamal *et al.*, 2012). Most literature allude that it is prudent to consider all levels of staff talents and have a comprehensive talent management system.

#### **4. METHODOLOGY**

The author approached this study using a process akin to the critical reflection research method strongly advocated by Jan Fook. According to Fook (2011), this method of research is popular among professionals. It is mainly used to assist practitioners in improving their approaches and practices in their respective areas. This reflective research or more popularly known as critical reflection has gain momentum especially in qualitative research in the areas such as social work and legal cases (Fook, 2004; Liamputtong, 2007; Morley, 2008). Critical reflection method is popular in these researches because it allows participants to reflect on their experiences and talk about the challenges they faced in their cases. It then offers participants a chance to reflect on what changes or new approaches they can embark on, in the event the critical incident happens again. This method allows practitioners to have a deeper understanding of their situation or cases and in turn think or reflect upon a better way to respond and approach the issue.

While conducting the research for this study, I began by reflecting on the fundamental assumptions that talent management practitioners, myself included, within the Malaysian PU environment had on current talent management and human resource management in general. The next level was, this method allowed me as the researcher to add my own understanding, observations and experience. Finally, based on literature and other research on talent management, it allowed the author to devise and adapt a new approach to talent management within Malaysian PU by bringing into talent management practices a value system, new ways to make it better and more responsive to current and future environment.

#### **5. MALAYSIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES (MPU) AND PRIVATE INDUSTRIES**

Malaysian Public Universities in the context of this study refers to the universities in Malaysia which are bound by Government policies and procedures especially in terms of financial management and human resource recruitment activities. Staffing and salary schemes are determined by the Government Central Agency and recruitment or selection processes in these universities cannot happen without the approval of the central agency. However, in recent years, there has been a relaxation on this grip when MPUs were awarded autonomy status on certain processes and the move towards MPUs generating their own income and be less dependent on government grants (Kosmo, 2018). The autonomous status allows decision making to be less bureaucratic, faster and the accountability lies with the Board of Directors/Governors of MPUs. The Ministries and Central Government Agencies now play a more strategic role and mostly monitor the overarching governance structure of MPUs. Hence, this autonomous status still binds MPUs on the fundamental principles of higher education and their strategic direction. A large portion of funding still comes from the Central Agency in various percentages and amount depending on the universities' capabilities.

Private industries or organisations on the other hand, are the private sector at large and means any economic entity not run by the government and has the intention to gain profit from their activities. These organisations or industries are free from government control.

At the end of the study, the researcher aspires to provide better insights on what HR practitioners and administrators in Malaysian Public Universities should focus on when managing talents. This is to ensure HR practitioners and administrators play a more strategic and pivotal role in the achievement of university goals and direction, hence acting as a reference in their respective positions. HR practitioners and career administrators in universities are the set of personnel who do not have teaching assignments in the universities. They are considered subject matter experts in the management and governance of the universities.

In addition to the above deliverables, this study will also conclude with a suggested Talent Management Framework to be considered for practical implementation developed from the findings of this study and review of literature on reports and studies conducted on the implementation of talent management in universities and private organisations.

## 6. TALENT MANAGEMENT

The word Talent Management gained centre stage in the world of business in 1997 when Steven Hankin of Mc Kinsey and Co. conducted a research on the importance of retaining and developing talents in organisations as reported by the McKinsey Quarterly, No. 3, 1998. This concept was further discussed in the book 'War for Talents' (Axelrod, Handfield-Jones, & Michaels, 2001). In the book, Axelrod *et al.* (2001) investigated how companies are facing a shortage of talent. It goes on to show findings of the importance of having people within the organisations with critical talents and skills such as decision making and the ability to adapt in a volatile situation and an uncertain environment. However, for companies to win this war and be able to lure talented people into the organisation or to retain superior talents in the organisation, there must first exist good talent management practices in the organisation.

Talent management may have different meanings and different depths to different people or sectors. Research findings garnered from case studies in the IT industry revealed that, in that industry, talent management practices are focused on retention of talents rather than any other aspects (Alias, Othman, Loon, Ridzuan, Krishnan, 2017; Dhamalakshmi, Kubendran, Vijayakumar, 2016). This is because in the IT industry, volatility and a robust attrition rate will potentially be draining financially. This is because, the industry is knowledge and skills based. In their research, they found that organisations that manage innovation and value creativity in their talents are what IT specialists look for. Companies which have developed a sound talent management package emphasising on retaining employees or talents have benefitted well. They invested in research, career development, reward and recognition. These ICT companies globally and locally have also ensured institution wide management support and involvement in talent management practices. Leaders in the organisation know the vision and way forward for the organisation. They are committed to ensure the organisation has the expertise and talents needed to enable achievement of strategic objectives. This commitment is cascaded down to the managers and executives who plan and execute strategies. Objective review and check and balance happen at all levels of the organisation to ensure continuity and transparency.

For the purpose of this paper, talent management is defined as the comprehensive process of systematically recognising the types of talent needed, identifying the positions to be filled, selecting and recruiting the most suitable candidates, developing or equip talents with the required skills, knowledge and expertise and finally retaining the people for the achievement of organisational goals and objectives.

A multitude of research and studies have found that talent management is an essential element for organisations to build their internal leadership capacity which will in turn provide greater financial returns in crucial areas such as shareholder returns, growth in net income, growth in market share, return on investments, return in sales which subsequently lead to sustainability and gaining competitive advantage (Alias et.al., 2017; Nancy, 2014; Collingo and Mellahi, 2009). Since talent management has been lauded as important, how does it affect employees? Is it just to benefit employers and organisations? Pfeiffer and Thiller (2015) wrote an article about a study by Deloitte carried out in 2014. The study found a two-pronged fork in talent management aspirations. The first is related to attractive job components and the other is the contents of the job. The study further proves that, in the millenium age or post 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is a significant shift in what talents look for from their organisations. Thus, to be effective, the more traditional and conservative goals of limiting recruitment practices to emulate market trends, educating and

developing talents to retain them, reducing turnover by offering attractive compensation, having a sound succession planning program may not be viable anymore. Rather than being dictated by the market or external trends, organisations should instead be crystal clear about their own strategic direction and define clear objectives and strategies to achieve those goals. Together with this knowledge, organisations will then be able to align that direction with the kind of talents that are needed, the costs and investment needed and the advantages that will potentially be gained.

## **7. THE “VUCA” WORLD**

The need for good and sound implementation of talent management has been extolled as most crucial in today’s business and industries. This whole concept has been made important due to the VUCA world we are living in today. VUCA is an acronym which started in the US military in the late 1990s that describes a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world. Then, it became more popular after the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. More recently, as the business world mirrored a turbulent, robust, rapidly changing environment, VUCA has been aptly adopted by the business environment to describe the “new normal”. Subsequently, with such a changeable and unpredictable working environment, organisations cannot help but customise their own programme in managing talents. Required competencies and skillsets deemed uniquely important to sustain the organisation and achieve its strategic goals and vision must be embedded in the talent management process.

Malaysian Public Universities too need to embrace the meaning of operating in the VUCA world. Volatility signifies the speed and magnitude of change the academic industry is experiencing. As an example, compared to their private counterparts, public universities may lag when reviewing and updating course content and syllabus. Private universities are more fluid in decision making and more in tune with the needs of industries. The volatility of today’s environment has also been driven by automation and digitisation, connectivity and innovated business model. Due to the volatility of the environment, hence, predictability is a matter of the past (Kraaijenbrink, 2018). Uncertainty and unpredictability of outcomes are to be expected. Decision-making is taken to a whole new level. Gone are the days of standard processes, bureaucratic and rigid flow of hierarchy. Forecasting has been made nearly impossible and structures should be versatile enough to prepare for uncertainties. To add salt to injury, talents in organisations also add to the uncertainty of doing business because management is uncertain of what they are looking for from employers. The need to retain good people is tremendous. How do you keep them if organisations do not know what they need for them to stay? The complex nature of doing business today is also the norm. Organisations public and private operate in a multitude of complexities. There are multi level of strategies and interconnectivity across countries. In public universities, things are more complex now more than ever due to changes in governance. New ways of leading and managing require new competencies, skills, attitudes, attributes and knowledge. Identification of these new requirements must be conducted at every level of talent in the universities. Universities must look both ways to succeed. Requirements for the university to move forward and requirements needed to understand and retain excellent talents. Finally, we are now functioning in an ambiguous environment. There are no precedents. The most valuable competencies may be innovativeness and creativity. Judgement calls must be carried out in most situations. There are no manuals to fall back on mainly because situations are unique. Thus, to be effective, organisations must ensure talents are well equipped with the competencies needed. To do this, leaders and management of the universities must first understand in total what the university stands for, where it is going and what is needed for it to get where it wants to go in terms of resources and expertise. In the VUCA world, it is safe to say that “CUSTOMISATION IS THE NEW NORMAL”

## **8. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS OF TALENT MANAGEMENT**

As mentioned earlier, for talent management to have a chance to efficaciously contribute towards the sustainability and success of any organisation, there are several key principles that need to be adhered to by the organisation, given the VUCA nature of the business environment. These principles listed below are by no means exhaustive.

The list may go on and on. The principles include:

- i. Literature suggests that organisations need to really understand the nature of their existence and their strategic direction before being able to develop an appropriate talent management program.
- ii. Organisations which invest in talent management programmes need to nurture a conducive environment for the programme to work. To do this effectively, leaders, management teams and the organisational structure must ensure that human resources at all levels of the hierarchy are respected and given the necessary chance to be creative and innovative. Talents know what is expected of them and directions are clear, and they should be allowed to use their talents to deliver.
- iii. Current and future business environment requires an organisation and its management team to be fully involved in developing their talent management program irrespective of whether it is developed in-house or using a third party. This comprehensive involvement from every level whether line or staff management allows the program to be fully customised in accordance with the strategic direction and focus of the organisation. Researches carried out in talent management evinced that benchmarking, best practices and emulating other organisations in their talent management programmes do not work anymore given the volatile nature of contemporary business environment.
- iv. In the continuum of talent management processes, two aspects are deemed more important. They are, retaining talents and developing talents with crucial expertise needed for today's environment. The war for talent is on, especially for excellent people. Universities are willing to invest in excellent talents. Consequently, university management must be a step ahead of competitors and learn what retains talents. Mere pay package and compensation as we traditionally know it, may not be what talents look for.

## **9. EMERGING TRENDS IN TALENT MANAGEMENT**

Vishalli Dongrie (2019) of KPMG opined that a significant trend in talent management is the usage of artificial intelligence (AI). Findings from a survey carried out by KPMG indicate that more than 50% of HR executives who participated in the survey agree that the HR functions and capabilities will be greatly enhanced and transformed with AI and analytics. This confidence stems from the fact that a large part of HR decisions such as recruitment and selection is open to human fallible and biasness. In practice, there is a shift now towards using algorithms and codes to come up with data for better decision making on talents.

Large companies and multi-nationals are dependent on analytics when making important and vital decisions. AI can handle and sort large amount of data crucial in providing HR managers and executives with systemised insights in aid of talent management decision making. The HR department in an organisation is the department which is in constant contact with human resource whether potential talents, new recruits, talent pool, succession planning, performance management or promotion. Therefore, as the first 'human' contact in any organisation, AI is a crucial ally to the HR department to ensure effective decision making, good governance and efficient process development.

A point to note here however, is that in Talent Management, AI is loosely used to refer to a situation where decision-making and analytics are aided by systems and programmes. Strictly speaking, this is in fact, Machine Learning and not Artificial Intelligence in its purest form. Looking at the developments and advancements of Machine Learning progressing into AI, for example Siri, Alexa and Sophie, it seems like AI is making more of an appearance sooner rather than later.

However, with any innovation and upgrade, setbacks are bound to happen. In 2017, the epic debate between Tesla and Space X, CEO, Elon Musk vs founder of Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg portrayed clearly in a fiery debate the potential impact AI could have on society (della Cava, 2018). Elon Musk in agreement with Stephen Hawking view AI as the worst event in the history of civilisation while Mark Zuckerberg laughed off such talk labelling it as irresponsible. Hence, in the Silicone Valleys around the world, AI scientists are keeping their vigil to ensure a safe and smooth evolution of AI into our lives.

Meanwhile, as the debate goes on about the good and bad in AI, AI in whatever definition we use, whether Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Intelligence, Machine Learning or Knowledge Engineering is something that we have taken for granted to ease many tasks in our lives professionally and personally. Today, AI has been a huge help in mistakes prone, voluminous, repetitive and mundane, necessary but non-value add tasks. This is a start, but clearly it is far from the actual capability of AI. AI also has the potential to assist decision-making and make it more objective as mentioned earlier. Dangers of pure AI penetrating our lives as Elon Musk warns us notwithstanding, Ashutosh and Kamal (2019) believe that AI in talent management is the way forward. They cite examples of the new generation of very talented workforce but with different requirements. Companies not only need to make the hiring environment welcoming, but it must be attractive enough to make talents want to stay. Sometimes, these talents leave after 18 months (Ashutosh and Kamal, 2019) which is especially true within the technology sector. Hence, in the IT industry, where ironically AI was born, Artificial Intelligence is used more heavily in selection mechanisms and matching what talents want with what organisations need and have, to offer to talents.

In the software industry, algorithm assisted decision making is another AI element making inroads into predicting the performance of new talents. In this new break-through, software companies succeeded in creating a more diverse workforce with multiple backgrounds and skillsets. This is then enhanced by vigorous mentoring and required development initiatives. Companies are homing in on talents with critical thinking skills, the ability to make difficult decisions in stressful times, the right attitude towards work, analytical and problem-solving skills. Mundane and routine work have been taken over by machines. This phenomenon is now evident in public universities with the increasing use of automation and analytics. Blended learning and machine assisted learning is being practised more and more.

## **10. THE WAY FORWARD**

Readings on talent management in industries show that, industries and private companies invest in any assets owned by them with the bottom line of turning the investment into profit. Industries may have a more focused talent management practise and activities as everything is tagged to the bottom line. Literature suggests that industries know their goals and objectives clearly and stakeholders are monitoring top management performance and constantly aligning them towards organisational strategic direction. In industries, talent management practices are focused towards activities that are important to them strategically and with high potential of profit making. For example, the ICT and technology industry prioritise attracting and retaining excellent talents due to the fluidity and volatility of the industry. This is also true of the service industry where inter-personal skills and soft skills are important. These industries invest heavily

on capacity building and competency development. The war for talents is truly happening in the VUCA business world.

Observing the new developments in the private sector across industries where talent management is such a priority, makes one wonder about the practices of Malaysian Public Universities. Institutions of Higher Learning are knowledge and service based. Universities provide a conducive environment for quality learning and developing with the purpose of providing talents to industries. The higher education sector is two-pronged in nature, universities compete to provide the best talents to suit the needs of industries and at the same time offer the best education experience and most perfect fit of knowledge to students to attract them into the university. Riccio (2010) in his PhD Thesis investigated talent management practices in private colleges and universities. His research focused on these pertinent areas - presidential vision, leadership commitment, position of talent management among institutional priorities, program characteristics, and program evaluation (Riccio, 2010). At the end of the research, Riccio (2010) discovered that eventhough private higher education valued having a strong talent pool, there were several disparities between the industries and private universities. Universities tend to give more attention towards the development of students and the learning environment and material. This assumption may be applicable to Malaysian Public Universities too. While industries are willing to invest more on their talents or workforce and to measure their return on investments, universities on the other hand, although they do send their human resource for development programmes but with minimal monitoring on the return on investment. These findings, however, are by no means universal and comprehensive. Nevertheless, Malaysian Public Universities may want to discover what they want from talent management if they see it as an important aspect of being relevant, competitive and a tool to achieve university goals.

## **11. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED FRAMEWORK**

In the course of researching for this paper, the author discovered a myriad of principles, factors, findings and talent management models that organisations use. It has been a very interesting and eye-opening journey and a good learning experience. Some gems that may prove to be useful if universities want to embark on talent management are listed below:

- i. Talent management is an enterprise-wide endeavour – everyone in the university must establish the same passion and believe that it is important.
- ii. Prior to developing a talent management framework, there must be a deep understanding of what the university stands for, its strategic direction and vision.
- iii. The management and HR department truly recognise the need and purpose of talent management and its expected deliverables before drawing up a talent management implementation plan.
- iv. There is an establishment of evaluation and measurement index to review the performance of talent management practices against university goals.
- v. The talent management program must address the needs of the university and understand the requirements of the talents the university wants to attract and retain.
- vi. An enterprise risk management profile will be an added advantage for universities to anticipate the risks associated and be prepared for them.

## **12. SUGGESTED TALENT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

Readings on talent management have prompted the author to develop a working talent management framework (TMF) deemed practical for universities. Ideas to develop the TMF were harnessed from several pertinent readings especially on talent management consultation and practices carried out at major companies such as Deloitte (2019), KPMG, Boston Consulting

Company and PwC (Jain, 2019). Ideas were also gathered from the University of California Human Resource Team on their project about Organisational Readiness and the factors contributing to its effective implementation (Lane, Crawford, Fahmy, Klink, Rasmussen & Wilhelm, 2015). Sanjay Jain (2019) was also instrumental in providing input through his report on Talent Management. The Talent Management Framework (TMF) is depicted in Figure 1 below. These ideas and input, together with the author's 26 years HR and talent management experience at a multi-sited Malaysian PU, resulted in what is hoped to be a practical framework that can be adopted by Malaysian PU and other organisations in their quest for an effective talent management practice. Since this is a reflective study, considerations were given to building a better way of conducting talent management in view of future developments and changes in the environment.

This framework includes elements important in talent management and considers the dynamics in a university. The author strived to list down necessary action plans and rudiments associated within the continuum of talent management processes to optimise usage of the workforce.

The overarching principle for TMF is Organisational Vision and Strategic Direction. TMF must start with a comprehensive appreciation of the university's reason for being, where it is going strategically and how it plans to get there. The two pillars framing TMF in this model are the university governance structure and organisational development strategies with the aim to move towards the end goal of organisational success and sustainability.

Talent management elements in this model starts from Job Planning, Knowledge-skills-attributes and other characteristics (KSAO), Talent system development (automation and digitisation), Training and development and finally, Retaining and Positioning. Training, development, retaining and positioning are core elements in the implementation of TMF. These four elements are superseded by identifying jobs that the university needs, known as job analysis under the job planning element, recognising KSAOs necessary to perform important tasks for the achievement of university goals will assist universities determine the type of talents they need and where to place those talents. As literature suggests, the use of AI is indispensable in talent management, hence, TMF has the automation and digitisation element to enhance the effectiveness of decision-making and analytics.

Focus of TMF is workforce optimisation for the achievement of university strategic direction, goals and vision. Strategies and suggested action plans for the implementation of TMF are depicted in Figure 1. For example, Planning in Talent management suggests the University management and leaders understand university strategic direction, what KSAOs are needed by the university to perform tasks needed to reach their objectives. The framework goes on to suggest what is needed to Gain talents, Develop, Retain, and Position talents as future leaders and experts.



Figure 1. Talent Management Framework (TMF).

### 13. CONCLUSION

Concluding this reflective study, the author would like to share some final analysis obtained from this journey.

Talent management is a good way forward in the VUCA world. It must, however, be done correctly to reap its potential benefits. From literature search carried out for this paper, personal and professional observation and working experience, it has been revealed that talent management and the identification of talents are deemed important to all organisations in most sectors, public or private.

A point to note, how a company or organisation defines talent and talent management will shape its approach and outreach in talent management practices within the organisation. Are talents identified as all employees or are they those who have achieved a certain performance level and years of experience? These differences in how an organisation looks at talent and talent management indicate that talent management needs to be an internal process or if a third party is engaged for objectivity, then a comprehensive understanding of what talent and talent management are to the company must be clarified. There is no “one-size-fits-all” solution.

Talent management needs to be an organisation wide effort and not left to the sole discretion of the HR office. If talent management is reckoned to be important and worth investing in, for the sustainability and competitive advantage of the organisation, then it commands the full-hearted involvement of all levels in the organisation and reviewed closely to align with organisational goals, objectives and mission.

In a VUCA environment, it would not be wise for organisations to depend on market trends, best practices and benchmarks to determine talent management practices most suited to the organisation. Customisation and knowing the strategic direction of the organisation will be more effective in identifying talents needed, means of developing and ways to retain talents the organisation has invested in.

The author concludes the paper by reiterating this tagline: CUSTOMISATION IS THE NEW NORMAL

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