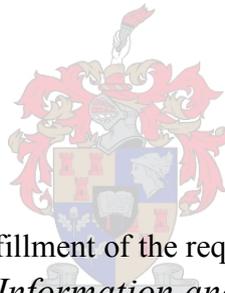


APPLICATION OF TALENT AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AS TOOLS TO ENHANCE BUSINESS

– A case of selected Zambian firms

by

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DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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OPSOMMING

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die betekenis en bruikbaarheid van die konsepte van talent en talentbestuur binne die raamwerk van kennisbestuur. Dit behels sowel 'n konseptuele analise as 'n gevallestudie van geselekteerde Zambiese maatskappye. Dit gaan hoofsaaklik oor hoe organisasies talent definieer binne die konteks van kennisbestuur en hoe dit gebruik word in inisiatiewe om die doeltreffendheid van personeel se werk in organisasies te verhoog.

Hoofstuk Een stel die konsep talentbestuur bekend en verduidelik die navorsingsontwerp van die tesis.

Hoofstuk Twee behandel die literatuuroorsig. Dit gee besonderhede van verskillende opvattinge oor talent en talentbestuur, asook oor die verhouding daartussen en kennisbestuur.

Hoofstuk Drie plaas die konsep van talent binne die konteks van kennisbestuur en ondersoek hoe dit kennis in die organisasie bevorder.

Hoofstuk Vier ondersoek die opvattinge oor en praktyke met betrekking tot talent in 'n aantal groot Zambiese organisasies.

Hoofstuk Vyf bied konklusies van die studie.

SUMMARY

This study is an investigation into the meaning and usefulness of the concepts of talent and talent management within the framework of knowledge management to enhance business. It comprises a conceptual analysis as well as a case study of selected Zambian companies. The main area of focus is how organisations define talent within the framework of knowledge management and how these concepts are used as initiatives to contribute to the effectiveness of staff in an organisation.

Chapter One is an introduction of the concept talent management and sets out the research framework for this thesis.

Chapter Two covers the literature review. It details views on talent and various schools of thought on talent management as well as the relationship between talent management and knowledge management.

Chapter Three situates an overview of talent in the context of knowledge management theories and investigates how the initiatives enable the flourishing of knowledge in an organisation.

Chapter Four investigates the notions of talent in a selection of large Zambian organisations with respect to their policies and practices relating to talent management.

Chapter Five presents the conclusion drawn from the research literature review and the ideal notions of talent in various organisations in Zambia.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

BOZ	Bank of Zambia
HR	Human Resource
ICT	Information Communication Technology
KCM	Konkola Copper Mine
KM	Knowledge Management
SECI	Socialization, Externalization, Combination, Internalization
TM	Talent Management
ZICTA	Zambia Information Communication Technology Authority

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

In today's organisations, the talents of the employees are considered to be an asset. Unfortunately, definitions of the concept "talent" differ widely. The same can be said about the concept of knowledge in organisations. As a consequence, organisations differ from one to the other in respect of their views on the management of talent and knowledge. The situation, therefore, calls for a deeper analysis of the two concepts in order to arrive at a proper understanding of the interplay between talent and knowledge. In that way, organisations might be able to make better decisions relating to knowledge management and talent management.

In knowledge economy, the main differentiators that have been recognised by organisations in developed and emerging economies are knowledge and talent as the only way organisations can remain competitive in their industries. Without the incorporation, recognition and clear understanding of talent and knowledge, there is a high likelihood of misdirected efforts or change orders in managing organisations.

Talent definition has evolved with the course of time with definitions relating to geographical location, organisational structure and other areas of interest. The first dictionary definition of "talent" refers to "a denomination of weight, used by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Greek, Romans, and other ancient peoples." Also, in the Bible in Mathew 25 verse 14, there is a reference to a man who was about to go on a journey, entrusted his property to his servants, giving each five talents, two and one respectively "according to his ability". By the thirteenth century, "talent" was related to an inclination or disposition and in the fifteenth century, it was

related to treasures, riches, mental endowment and natural ability. Later on, in the nineteenth century, talent was viewed as embodied in the talented people.¹

In modern society, talent has been redefined but still has a lot of definitions around it. Talent has been defined as “a unit of value equal to the value of a talent of gold or silver”, “characteristic feature, aptitude or disposition of a person or animal”, a natural endowment of a person, general intelligence or mental power which is ability. It is also defined as a person of talent or a group of persons of talent in a particular field or activity.² The other operational definition and one which can be taken as the most appropriate is that the term talent designates the superior mastery of systematically developed abilities and knowledge in at least one field of human endeavour. Talent is also refers to a learner who has the ability to excel in practical skills such as sport, leadership, and artistic performance or in an applied skill.³ Further, talent is also referred to as the possession of repeatable skills that don't depend on physical size⁴.

With regard to organisations, talent refers to those individuals who effectively and efficiently contribute to the organisation with exception. Even Nilsson⁵ delineates the term talent to people who contribute to organisation performance or performance of the individuals. In some organisations, the definition of talent is not clear but the one who is considered to be talented is the one who exceptionally achieves the organisations' or business' set objectives. Talent is also defined in organisational sense as combined capacity and will to achieve organisation's goals. Additionally, talent means the total of all the experience, knowledge, skills, and behaviours that a person has and brings to work. Talent, therefore, is used as an all-encompassing term to describe the human resources that organisations want to acquire, retain and develop in order to meet their business goals.⁶

This brings us to the definition of talent management. The broad definition of talent management is that, it encompasses the instrumentation of unifying strategies or processes in order to enhance the output of a work place by deploying ameliorate systems and processes for

¹ Tansley C, 2011. "What Do we mean by the Term “Talent” in Talent Management?"

² Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2009. Student Edition.

³ Cartwright S, 2011. How can I enable the gifts and talents of my students to be in the driving seat of their learning? Gifted Education International.

⁴ Coyle D, 2009. The Talent Code. Greatness isn't born. Its Grown. Here is how.

⁵ Nilsson S, 2012. Employability and talent management: challenges for HRD practices

⁶ Cheese P, Thomas RJ, Graig E, 2013. The talent powered organization : strategies for globalization, talent management and high performance

attracting, developing, retaining and utilising of required skills and abilities of workforce and their aptitude matched with the current and upcoming business needs.⁷ For talent management to be effective in organisations, versatile and responsive talent is needed in this knowledge economy for organisations to be competitive and deliver on their strategic aspirations. In the knowledge economy, the employees and the organisations become mutually interdependent on each other.⁸ For the organisation to deliver or remain competitive in the industry they have to use the knowledge or the talents of the individuals and the individuals have to depend on the organisation for their career development and for them to grow their talents.

With talent comes knowledge which is defined as an epistemic goal in the generation of a particular proposition or belief.⁹ Knowledge is also referred to as the ability to act intelligently.¹⁰ The knowledge in an organisation comes in two forms; one is located in employee's heads and is known as tacit knowledge and the other is embedded in processes or codified in written forms (manuals, flow charts etc.). Significant proportions of knowledge in organisations are in a tacit form; which means that it is the employees who control knowledge. Tacit knowledge of an individual can be transferred to tacit knowledge of a team or a group by conversations, dialogue, and coaching, mentoring and face-to-face meetings.

For knowledge to be applied effectively to performance by an individual, Knowledge management becomes important. Knowledge management is defined as “doing what is needed to get the most out of knowledge resources”. It is a discipline that promotes the creation, distribution, and leveraging of knowledge in an organisation or social system.¹¹

The definitions discussed above may not be perfect but they will help in understanding the topic under study. The main premise of this thesis is that once talent is understood in the context of knowledge management, organisations are fundamentally expected to have a competitive edge against those who do not fully apply talent and knowledge management.

⁷ Bano S, Khan MA, Rehman QH, Humayoun AA, 201. Schematizing Talent Management, A Core Business Issue.

⁸ Schoemaker M, Jonker J, 2004. Managing intangible assets: An essay on organising contemporary organisations based upon identity, competencies and networks.

⁹ Sartwell C, 1992. Why is Knowledge Merely True Belief?

¹⁰ Kinghorn J, 2011. Understanding Knowledge. Lecture Notes.

¹¹ Bacerra- Fernades I, Sabherwal R , 2010. Knowledge management : systems and processes.

1.2 Research Proposition

The understanding of knowledge management cannot be complete without the understanding of talent and its application in modern organisations. For organisations to run effectively, the notions of talent have to be fully understood. It is for this reason that this study looks at the link between talent and knowledge management in terms of meaning and concept usefulness in selected Zambian companies.

1.2.1 Research Objective

The main aim of this thesis is to determine the interplay between concepts of talent and the management of knowledge in selected Zambian companies, by investigating the meaning and usefulness of the concepts to enhance business. This will be achieved through the specific objectives below:

- i. Establish the application of Talent and Knowledge Management among selected Zambia firms
- ii. Determine how these concepts are applied in selected Zambian firms to enhance organisational management
- iii. Propose ways in which Talent and Knowledge Management could improve competitiveness in selected Zambian firms
- iv. Establish the relationship between Talent and Knowledge Management
- v. Profile studies undertaken in the similar industries for comparative analysis in which to anchor the finds.

The rationale for the main objective is that there is increasing talk in organisations about the need to manage talent in order to be better prepared for the challenges of a competitive economic environment. Sometimes people link this talk to the questions around the management of knowledge. After all, there is a widespread acceptance that the world is moving into the knowledge economy era and concepts such as talent and knowledge clearly become crucial and warrant careful investigation. The problem is that there is no clear and uniform conception of what is meant by “talent”, and consequently, what it means to manage talent. There is also ambivalence around the concept of knowledge and yet people in organisations are using these words loosely, with little or no standard meaning attached to them. The management actions associated with these concepts are ambiguous. This is not a good basis for effective management and it is a recipe for confusion in organisations. Organisations work their

way around these concepts. As earlier stated, the economy is moving into a knowledge economy era and the problem of defining the terms knowledge and talent will increase unless serious investigation on the concepts is conducted. The thesis approaches the topic from a fundamental premise; usually this issue is approached from the angle of human resources (who are by their nature practice orientated) and a consequence to this, is the emphasis on management activities, and restricted to talent only. In this thesis, however, the angle of approach is from the perspective of knowledge in organisations. From this angle, the thesis investigates talent as being a knowledge capacity. It is for that reason that the thesis links talent to the principles of knowledge management. The thesis is convinced that the linking of talent to knowledge management brings depth to the understanding of talent, and offers a better platform for talent management in the actual life of organisations.

Therefore, the question that remains to be answered is “what notion of ‘talent’ accords best with knowledge management principles and to what extent is that notion of talent functional in selected Zambian companies?”

1.2.2 Methodology and Assumptions

The research question has been answered with the use of conceptual analysis which consists of literature review on the concept of talent. Further, review of the perceptions and approach to the understanding of talent has been put forward. The purpose has been to profile the various conceptual meanings of talent in today’s world and looked at the ideal notion of talent in relation to knowledge management.

The conceptual examination seeks to increase the understanding of the word talent in the context of knowledge management in organisations. Through the understanding of talent, a clear direction in terms of what to look for in defining talent, as there are different schools of thought which cause confusion to managers in organisations has been given. Further, the thesis attempts to elucidate the principles of knowledge management in which the notions of talent can flourish for the betterment of the organisations.

After profiling of various conceptions of talent, an ideal conception which closely fits well in knowledge management has been picked to better understand the conceptions.

Further, the thesis looks at the observations and evaluation of large organisations in Zambia with regard to their working conceptualisation of talent. The number of companies which were sampled was 10 and was mainly from the Zambian cosmopolitan provinces which are Lusaka

and Copperbelt provinces. The observations and evaluation were purely based on the information gathering from the sampled organisations. There are two firms from each sector that were chosen from the underlisted:

- a) Financial
- b) Telecommunication
- c) Mining
- d) Manufacturing
- e) Semi and Quasi Government

1.2.3 Delimitation

The scope of the cases dealt with in this thesis is limited to the literature on talent based on 10 Zambian organisations, and the information or material on the organisations was based on the information available in the public domain such as journals, yearly reports, and online publication. Further, the research only focused on talent in selected Zambian companies' and talent profile and approaches in these companies were reviewed.

Secondly, not all the companies' understanding of talent were reviewed but only selected Zambian companies with a population of about 500 and above were selected with an exception of Zambia Information Communication and Telecommunication Authority (ZICTA) that has only 150 employees. The reason for choosing ZICTA is because it is a quasi-government institution and regulates the telecommunication industries where we have picked two Telecommunications companies. It has been envisaged that the inclusion of ZICTA will provide a fair understanding of talent in that sector. The focus is only on notions of talent in relation to knowledge management. There was no interview which was conducted to understand talent in the sampled organisations but only available information on their websites, annual reports, journals etc. The other sources of information such as participant observation, use of semi structured interviews and questionnaires could not be used as the information could not be easily obtained. Some organisations may consider the information on talent to be confidential for public consumption and the research would have been delayed if we had requested for information from them hence using the mentioned sources. The the review of the sources of information used was adequate to provide an overview of the organisations.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

In order to clearly answer the research objective which looks at what notions of talent accords best with knowledge management principles and to what extent are the notions of talent functional in selected Zambian companies? The study is structured as follows:

Chapter One is an introduction on the concept talent management and looks at the various definitions of talent management. Chapter One also covers the operational definition of the term talent in various contexts with an emphasis on organisational talent management.

Chapter Two is the literature review and it looks at detailed works on talent and various schools of thought on talent management. This section will also look at the relationship between talent management and knowledge management.

Chapter Three looks at talent in the context of knowledge management theories. It will also show how talent management fits in the context of knowledge management with illustrations on how the initiatives enable the flourishing of knowledge in an organisation.

Chapter Four looks at the notions of talent in *Zambian* large organisations that were picked for the review of the policies and practices relating to talent management. Further, the chapter also looks at the comparative discussion of each organisation in relation to the understanding of talent and the practice.

Chapter Five also presents the conclusion drawn from the research literature review and the ideal notions of talent in various organisations in *Zambia*. The conclusion will further look at talent management on whether it can still survive in the years to come and if there was any room of improvement. The conclusion will also offer the practical talent management initiatives which have been applied in the *Zambian* companies under study.

Chapter 2

Conceptualisation of talent

2.1 Introduction to talent

This chapter extensively looks at the meaning of the concepts, knowledge and talent. The emphasis on understanding talent was to unlock the paradoxical perceptions about talent, which will lead to a logical relationship between talent and knowledge management. There are fundamentally two lines of thought on talent, one is that talent is innate and the other one is that talent is an acquired phenomena. In addition to the understating of talent as innate and acquired ability, there is also organisational understanding of talent, even though the phenomenon falls within the ambit of the two notions of talent. It is from this background that this study draws similarities and differences between the two concepts and then gives an appropriate definition.

Talent is recognition of an individual's potential for success in a given domain. It is concerned with talent development which refers to the nurturing of potential, through attention to the provision of appropriate training and resources.¹²

There are four phenomena as regards the concept talent that are worth understanding in this study. One is talent within an organisation which is referred to as recognised talent, but not necessarily strategic talent. There is also Expert talent which refers to an expert in a particular field. This may be strategic talent if the expertise relates to strategic objectives of the organisation. Another talent phenomenon is genius, talent which refers to an extraordinary

¹² Baker J, Cobley S, & Schorer M, 2012. Talent Identification and Development in Sport.

capability that is difficult to replicate. The last one is the unrecognised talent which may not have been identified by existing talent management processes.¹³

According to Visser, Talent is a combination of both generic and specific elements and elements that are based on innate characteristics and skills that have to be learned. This definition implies that someone cannot just become a talented or an exceptional performer unless if they possess some aptitude. It is very important to understand and acknowledge that talent is not one-dimensional phenomenon, but has multiple components which need to be considered for one to really appreciate the full meaning of talent. It will be easy and necessary to check which areas are learnable, so that one can work on them or which the coach or line manager can focus on developing. Talent is the above average giftedness for a given task.¹⁴ It is actually considered as unified elements that result in exceptional performance.¹⁵

According to the Encyclopaedia of Giftedness, Creativity and Talent, talent is described as a term that lacks common understanding and agreed meaning. The original meaning was that of a weight, especially of silver or gold. In ancient times, talent was used to describe the unit of mass, value or money as the word is devised from the Latin “talentum” which comes from Greek *τάλαντον*, meaning scale or measuring balance. It was only later in history that the term was associated with the human performance.¹⁶

The word talent can be vague and loaded with slippery overtones about potential, particularly when it comes to young people; research shows that being a prodigy is an unreliable indicator of long-term success. In the interest of clarity, we will define talent in its strictest sense; the possession of repeatable skills that don't depend on physical size.

2.1.1 Talent and giftedness

In common usage, talent and giftedness mean essentially the same thing. For some, talent refers to artistic, creative, intellectual, or athletic excellence whereas giftedness in this concept is defined as the overall ability of the person. Talent then would develop in areas of specific aptitude that were valued and rewarded by society and where significant practice occurred to develop high-levels of specific performances. Others see talent as the outcome of developed

¹³ Foster C, Moore N & Stokes P, 2013. Rethinking talent management in organisations.

¹⁴ Shoemaker M, 2005. Talent Competence.

¹⁵ Sluis L. & Bunt-kokhuis S. , 2009. Competing for Talent.

¹⁶ Kerr B, 2009. Encyclopaedia of Giftedness, Creativity and Talent.

natural abilities regardless of the talent domain. Talent has been proposed as a more useful and less offensive concept than giftedness. Talent in this understanding can be defined in terms of performance criteria, whereas giftedness is seen as a personal characteristic.¹⁷

Giftedness describes learners who have the ability to excel academically in one or more subjects such as English, Drama, Technology; whereas talent describes learners who have the ability to excel in practical skills such as sport, leadership, artistic performance, or applied skill.

In structuring learning, the United Kingdom described talented individuals as learners who have the ability to excel in practical skills such as sport, leadership, artistic performance, or in an applied skill. Then the term Gifted is used to describe learners who have the ability to excel academically in one or more subjects such as English, Drama and Technology.¹⁸

The uncertainty about the differences between gifts, aptitudes, talents, and performances is understandable because all are closely related. There was a suggested differentiation that clarified the differences between gifts and talents. Talents can be thought of as capacities to learn, underlying potential, or natural ability. Giftedness can be thought of as high levels of aptitude.¹⁹

Talents or high-level performance do not follow automatically from gifts. An individual may be born with high-level aptitudes, which are latent talents, but without the proper dispositions, education, and environments, the talents may remain latent. Gagné proposed two broad categories of catalytic factors that sped up or slowed down the transformation of gifts into talents. One category of catalysts is those things internal to the person. These intrapersonal catalysts include things such as motivation and temperament. There are also catalysts external to the person, or environmental catalysts. These environmental catalysts include their surroundings, the people, places, events, and opportunities that exist for them. Gagné also includes chance factors that are more random and uncontrollable, but like intrapersonal and environmental catalysts, may speed up or slow down the individual's talent development.²⁰

¹⁷ Kerr B, 2009. Encyclopaedia of Giftedness, Creativity and Talent

¹⁸ Cartwright S, 2012. How can I enable the gifts and talents of my students to be in the driving seat of their learning?

¹⁹ Gagne' F, 2000. Understanding the complete choreography of talent development through DMGT-based analysis

²⁰ Kerr B, 2009. Encyclopaedia of Giftedness, Creativity and Talent

2.1.2 Talent and genius

Talent and genius are different concepts and this can be viewed from the position that Reis has put with regard to these two terminologies. According to Reis Musical genius was phrased as that inborn inexplicable gift of nature, or original faculty to create with facility aesthetic ideas and the most fitting expression in the melodic and harmonic organisation of tones. It further states that genius is actually that inner fire burning in the composer which is continuously inspired in him and the beautiful melodies that capture the attention of the listener and captivates the composer. Reis also believes that talent imitates, whereas genius reveals itself in some form of originality. Genius is the driving power, a divine instinct, guided by a divine thoughtfulness which makes it original, inborn and cannot be learned as it expresses itself unconsciously.²¹

Others see talent as the outcome of developed natural abilities regardless of the talent domain. At about the same time, Leta Hollingsworth distinguished talent from genius. She initially defined genius as having a wonderful capacity for mental perfection and talent as a remarkable ability, but falling short of genius. Later, she modified this definition and suggested that the term talent be used to describe specialised aptitudes such as music or art.²²

2.1.3 Talent and expertise

To understand the subject on talent further, it is important to look at the concept talent in comparison to expertise as there are some misunderstandings that arise from this. Clearly, both talent and expertise suggest very high levels of ability relative to conventional levels of skill in a domain, but they should not be thought of as being the same. More precisely, although talent (when expressed) entails expertise, expertise does not necessarily imply talent. This is because expertise as a status merely reflects a high level of competency resulting from extended training, experience in a domain, or both. Talent, on the other hand, refers to innate potential that may or may not get actualised into expertise. Someone with innate potential for acquiring a foreign language, such as Russian, may only have this potential actualised if his or her school or parents provide exposure to Russian. At the same time, someone with no innate talent for foreign language acquisition may, given enough practice, achieve a level of fluency indistinguishable from his talented counterpart. Thus, expertise says little about the origins of

²¹ Reis SM, 2009. Ten thousand hours of practice, musical aptitude and inner fire: developing musical talent in young people.

²² Kerr B, 2009. Encyclopaedia of Giftedness, Creativity and Talent.

initial conditions that led to that high level of ability. Even proponents of a genetic basis for talent agree that the attainment of expertise necessitates extended periods of training, but this is a different argument than suggesting that talent is required in order to attain expertise.²³ Consequently, the argument that talent is not innate because expertise can be acquired does not seem to hold much water. What this evidence does show, however, is that high levels of ultimate attainment in a given domain may be achieved via multiple developmental pathways. For some people and for some domains, this pathway may rely more heavily on innate talent. For other people and for other domains, initial potential may not be as variable and differences in ultimate levels of actualisation may depend more heavily on the level of proximal processes in the environment.²⁴

2.1.4 Talent and academia

Academic talent in students refers to students who perform well in all coursework, exhibit teacher-pleasing behaviours, and conform to the norms of the school. From this definition, the challenge for educators is to recognise academic alert students who are withdrawn, rebellious or otherwise demonstrate problem behaviours in the classroom. Students who possess academic talent can, therefore, out-perform their fellow students who do not possess traditional academic abilities, but rather creative-productive abilities.

2.1.5 Categories of talents

In 1983, Abraham Tannenbaum suggested more specific meanings with four categories or classifications of talent: scarcity, surplus, quota, and anomalous talents. Scarcity talents are those in short supply, but that benefit and are needed by society and all peoples. Scarcity talents include high-level performances in areas such as innovations that make the world safer, healthier, easier, and more understandable. Surplus talents are those talents that are desired by society, but not essential to its survival. Musicians, artists, actors, and writers fit in this category. Tannenbaum was not calling surplus talents unimportant or superfluous; they made significant contributions to society. Their contributions, though, were not at the same critical level as medical breakthroughs, solving world hunger, or curing mental illness. Quota talents are those somewhere between surplus and scarcity talents. They are specialised, high-skill-level performances for which the market is limited. In quota talent performance, it is clear how

²³ Ericsson KA, Charness PJ, 1994. An introduction to Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance: Its development, organization, and content.

²⁴ Kerr B, 2009. Encyclopaedia of Giftedness, Creativity and Talent.

the individual attains top-level performance and no creative breakthroughs are required. Physicians, teachers, lawyers, engineers, business leaders, and public officials work in quota talent areas. Tannenbaum's final talent area is anomalous talent. These talents are exceptional feats that sometimes have a practical value but in other cases only provide entertainment or amusement. Anomalous talents include speed readers, mountain climbers, Broadway singers, gourmet chefs or cooks, and anachronistic manual craftsmen.

Talents, however, were defined as high levels of developed abilities or performances. The assessment of talent must be defined and measured in real-world terms and performances. This is not true of aptitude measures that are assessed indirectly with field performance tasks unique to the assessment and not directly measuring any real-world performance catalysts.

Talent is also described as those people who do one or other of the following: regularly demonstrate exceptional ability – and achievement – either over a range of activities and situations, or within a specialised and narrow field of expertise; consistently indicate high competence in areas of activity that strongly suggest transferable, comparable ability in situations where they are yet to be tested and proved to be highly effective, that is potential.²⁵

This implies that for an individual to be called Talented, he or she must have shown consistent levels of performance. Talent also refers to the sum of a person's abilities — his or her intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgment, attitude, character and drive. This also includes his or her ability to learn and grow.²⁶

For us to understand the topic under discussion, it is imperative to look at different schools of thought and unlock the ambiguities in different talent definitions.

2.2 Talent as an innate characteristic

There are two different schools of thought with regard to what talent means. One school of thought believes that talent is inborn while the other believes that talent is taught or acquired. For now, we will look at the former in detail and then focus on the latter in the next section. A lot of study constructs has been done to the terminology but one of the major culprit of ambiguity is the etymology of the term talent.

²⁵ William M, 2000. The war for talent: Getting the best from the best.

²⁶ Michaels E, Handfield-Jones H, Axelrod B, 2001. The war for talent.

2.2.1 Talent etymology

Talent has changed its meaning from time to time and as such, the interpretations have been different. According to the English version of talent, talent is an innate giftedness that manifests itself in a particular field of endeavour and is linked to outstanding performance in some way.²⁷

The definition of talent in other European Languages also stresses the point that talent is an innate endowment. For example, in Danish, talent is considered as innate abilities for a specific field. In French, talent is referred to as a disposition given by God and recognised by people who can appreciate it. Then in Russian, it is defined as outstanding innate qualities especially natural gifts while in Polish, talent refers to a person endowed with unusual ability to do something in an outstanding creative way.

2.2.2 Talent as an innate potential

It can be argued from the foregoing that talent is innate as no one can learn to be an artist, but it is something one has inside themselves. It is some kind of ability one has got during his or her upbringing or something genetically inherited. Talent is an individual ability which makes one to do things differently as it is the result of an inborn trait. It is also explicit as a self to be discovered and expressed — a self characterised trait by its potentiality, not by its accomplishments, competencies, or skills. Talent has to be worked upon to mature hence; it cannot be that it is just developed from scratch with no existence.²⁸

The more a talented person receives more training or practice, the more they gain from their efforts. No matter how many hours the average person practices, he will not hit a tennis ball like Pete Sampras, sing like the Three Tenors, solve a differential equation like the late physicist Richard Feynman, or programme a computer like Microsoft's founder, Bill Gates.²⁹ The implication is that if someone is talented, the training or practice will be just an added support.

Talent implies an apparently native ability for a specific pursuit and connotes either that it is or that it can be cultivated by the one possessing it. Talent, in this view, is merely the potential

²⁷ Tansley C, 2011. What do we mean by the term “talent” in talent management?

²⁸ Coll CG, Bearer EL, Lerner RM, 2004 C. Nature Nurture. The complex Interplay of Genetics and Environmental Influence on Human Behaviour and Development.

²⁹ Howe M, Davidson J, Sloboda J, 1998. Innate talents: Reality or myth?

for excellence, which can either be nurtured or wasted.³⁰ It is the innate ability of an individual which helps to become experts in any field of endeavour.

Another definition of talent is that it is the above average giftedness towards a task through which an employee creates added value in his or her work.³¹

The fact that we can get ordinary people to achieve at high levels is also not an argument against talent. High performance in trained individuals is not inconsistent with innate differences in ease of mastery or attainable level. Although the other talent account supports that the quality and not quantity of practice is important, it is quality that is likely to be constrained by innate ability.³² Gifted children are endowed with innate talents that make them known from a very early age, a view echoed by researchers whose focus is giftedness and who publish in journals devoted to the study of gifted children. The children who are dedicated and work hard on their assignments or task are the ones with a high level of talent. Most children cannot be coaxed to play music or think about maths problem hours on end, but highly gifted children cannot be persuaded away from such initiatives.³³

On whether talent is innate or acquired, Robert *et al*³⁴ conducted an attribution survey or perception survey on what the parents, teachers and students with musical talent perceive as a contributing factor. The findings were that parents considered their contributions of encouragement and opportunities provided to their children more important than the inborn ability. Then teachers regarded their contribution, schoolwork and other school initiatives as major influences in developing musical talent for the students and discounted the influence of family and friend. The students themselves regarded their inborn ability and hard work as the contributing factor for their success. This confirms that even on the perceptions, there is no agreed contributing factor, but what is common is that people have inborn talent.

In relation to the organisation, talent is measured against performance. An individual will be a talent for an organisation if he or she performs the set objectives assigned to him or her in the role he or she is performing. Outstanding performance is the combination of both innate talent and good preparation of the educational background. For someone to perform in the role they

³⁰ Howe M, Davidson J, Sloboda J, 1998. Innate talents: Reality or myth?

³¹ Schoemaker M, Jonker J, 2004 . Personnel management in the Modern Organisation

³² Howe M, Davidson J, Sloboda J, 1998. Innate talents: Reality or myth?

³³ Winner E, 2009. Giftedness. Current Theory and Research.

³⁴ Evans RJ, Bickel R., Pendarvis ED, 2000. Musical Talent: Innate or Acquired?

are sitting in, they have to possess the required innate talent otherwise they are not going to be performers.³⁵

In other ways, superior performance is a combination of two things, the talent itself and practice which will result into a high achiever. For instance, a story is told of a young boy who had some genetic predisposition for playing basketball and his father recognised his genetic penchant. Upon recognition of the basketball inclination, the boy's father played with the son regularly than normal. This resulted into the son's abilities to improve beyond those of his peers and the exceptional performance earned him a first place in a school team. By getting a first place in the school team, it augmented the interest the boy had in basketball even more and this resulted in exposure to expertise coaching. Therefore, the development of the young boy's competence and skill was as the result of the initial genetically based endowment and the extensive practice.

As Goethe emphasises a person born with a talent they are meant to use will find their greatest happiness in using it. This quote implies that talent is innate or inborn and just needs to be nurtured within the individual without which it will go to waste. If the talent is natural the individual will enjoy it as it will bring a lot of satisfaction to them.

2.2.3 Innate ability and environmental influence

The research by Evans and others showed that Talent is innate and it is improved on by the support that is given by the parents and also the environment in which an individual is brought up. In addition, the students who have musical talent are also encouraged by the teachers and friends and this contributes to the students to focus and have the self confidence. On the other hand, there are also students who can be discouraged that they do not have musical ability, but are able to perform well in music. This implies that despite the encouragement and discouragement from the peers both results show that there is some inborn ability which is accentuated by the exposure and the early trainings.³⁶

Talent can develop in very different ways for genetically distinct individuals. This implies that two adults with the same talent may have developed that talent through contrary epigenetic routes, and two adults with totally different talents may have had very similar childhood talents. The possibility that talent domains vary greatly in the number of essential components makes

³⁵ Groyberg B, 2010. Chasing Stars: The Myth of Talent and the Portability of Performance.

³⁶ Evans R J, Bickel R., Pendarvis ED, 2000. Musical Talent: Innate or Acquired?

matters all the more intricate. The more components participate in the constitution of a given talent, the greater the heterogeneity of available epigenetic profiles for that talent. In addition, in comparison to simple domains, highly complex domains are likely to require much more time before all the requisite components initiate and complete their growth trajectories. Hence, talent for simple domains might appear in childhood or early adolescence, but talent for complex domains may not emerge until late adolescence or early adulthood.³⁷

Ervin Laszlo, a concert pianist, philosopher, teacher and editor defined musical talent as "the peculiar ability of some people to make music superlatively well. Laszlo also believed that musical talent included inherent and acquired dispositions toward aesthetic expression and self-expression using one particular artistic medium, explaining that, "intense feeling potentials combined with a disposition for its aesthetic expression in and through sound, presents the basic material of music. Laszlo also believed that talent is an innate disposition, but for the talent to be realised, there must be education to develop the identified talent."³⁸

2.2.4 Talent as hereditary

Talent cannot be acquired, but it can only be inherited. Galton's view states that just as height and other physical attributes are inherited, so does "eminence." He proved his theory by showing how large the numbers of instances in which men who are more or less illustrious have eminent kinsfolk. By scouring the obituaries in the Times, he assembled hundreds of pages of evidence illustrating this tendency among judges, poets, commanders, musicians, painters, "divines," and "wrestlers in the north country," among others. The research revealed that eminence in particular fields ran in particular family units. The ability to attain such superior eminence must be hereditary or present at birth.³⁹

Based on the argument that talent is inherited, one can ask a question about why the family of Warren Buffet is not the richest or do not have the same business acumen like everyone in their lineage, if talent is inherited. What must be understood in answering this question is that no DNA or gene is hundred percent the same even though individuals come from the same family. But the difference in genes results in peculiar differences in eminence. It is also known that

³⁷ Simonton DK, 1999. Origins of genius. Darwinian perspective on creativity.

³⁸ Simonton DK, 1999. Origins of genius. Darwinian perspective on creativity.

³⁹ Simonton DK, 1999. Origins of genius. Darwinian perspective on creativity.

one does not reach the high elevations of any field without an IQ that is off the charts or an impeccable memory.

It has also been believed that innate talent or intelligence is an inborn asset, inherited through genes, fixed at birth and stable throughout life. Following Galton definition of natural selection, differences in human intellect are strictly a matter of human heredity. Galton added that successful people were simply gifted with a superior genetic factor which made them to exceptionally work or achieve their desired goals.⁴⁰ The question in line with this thought still remains; that if there were no immutable inborn limits, why wouldn't every highly motivated individual reach the highest level?

The other argument is that if talent is nurtured or just developed, why is it difficult to be predicted either by assessing the individual or checking the familial heredity? It is because talent is innate and so cannot be predicted. Additionally, genetic traits do not all appear at birth but rather they develop according to inherited epigenetic trajectories. This phenomenon explains the reason why twins who were reared apart will still look similar in appearance and age. Each talent possesses a component which makes up a particular emergent talent with its own distinctive growth pattern. This epigenetic pattern will determine when the trait's development begins to "kick in," the speed at which it grows, and the point at which growth levels off and terminates.⁴¹

If one looks around his or her society, school, community or social environment and how the people around spend their time and how well they do what they do, the response would likely be they do it well or perfectly. Most of the people do whatever they do to keep attaining the expected average, which normally keeps them comfortable. It is only a few people around us who are truly great, with world class excellence. While the rest are good, conscientious people work diligently and some of them have been doing what they do for a number of times of years. This implies that being experienced or working for a long time in the same or similar position does not make one an exceptional performer. If anything, performance and alertness of that person reduce over time.⁴²

⁴⁰ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong .

⁴¹ Simonton DK, 1999. Origins of genius: Darwinian perspective on creativity.

⁴² Simonton DK, 1999. Origins of genius: Darwinian perspective on creativity.

Conventional wisdom does not agree or accept that talent is obtained from everyday means and genes, but it is believed that some people are born with innate gifts. It also believed that these innate abilities make a difference when they have been polished.

Additionally, other research also reveals that while companies fundamentally value experienced managers, the study shows that an average “manager with experience did not produce high calibre outcomes. Most experienced doctors reliably score lower on tests of medical knowledge than do less experienced doctors; general physicians also become less skilled over time at diagnosing heart sounds and X-rays. Auditors become less skilled at certain types of evaluations. It is obviously expected for someone to think that working hard will bring exceptional performance or results, but this is not true in a lot of circumstances as most individuals just become good at what they do and not exceptional. Great performance is actually in individuals’ hands far more than what most people ever thought it to be. This confirms that talent is an innate phenomenon as no amount of practice will result in exceptional performance unless talent is innate in that particular person.⁴³ This now takes us to the next school of thought which will detail that talent is an acquired phenomenon.

2.3 Talent as an acquired ability – practice

In 1924, John B. Watson, the renowned behaviourist, proclaimed,

“Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I’ll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select—doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant chief, and yes, even beggar-man or thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors.”⁴⁴

2.3.1 Talent as intense practice

There is a spectrum line of thought has emphasised that there is no evidence to the fact that talent is innate and that expertise in any domain can be explained by intense practice and coaching. It is stated that deliberate practice for extended periods of time is the driving force behind expert performance. This assertion is evidenced by the fact that researchers have cited with the demonstration that within any domain, attainment of expertise requires extended

⁴³ Simonton DK, 1999. Origins of genius: Darwinian perspective on creativity.

⁴⁴ Papierno BP, Ceci JS, Makel CM, Williams MW, 2005. The Nature and Nurture of Talent.

periods of practice and that following extreme levels of practice, ordinary individuals can perform at levels that are indistinguishable from those of the so-called gifted individuals.⁴⁵

Another conceptual understanding of talent is that it is a mastery skill and the focus is on deliberate practice and experience and not inborn ability. It has been agreed in various literatures that talent is not inborn but acquired through deliberate practice. The understanding of this school of thought is that talent as an inborn ability cannot produce any evidence, but talent as mastery skill is evidence based as indicated in a number of researches that have been conducted worldwide.

Talent must be demonstrated by a measurable consistent superior performance, which everyone can be able to see. This is also common in organisations as they classify an employee as talented only after they have seen the performance and contributions of that particular individual. If talent was inborn, why is it that a person in the same industry cannot perform in one organisation but can perform well in another organisation?⁴⁶

Peters has stated that deep practicing makes one to master the skill and become very good at it. That mastering of skill is what is referred to as talent. Deep practice is built on a paradox; struggling in certain targeted ways — operating at the edges of your ability, where you make mistakes — makes you smarter.⁴⁷ This is in tandem with what Charles Darwin meant when he said

“I have always maintained that, excepting fools, men did not differ much in intellect, only in zeal and hard work.”

Talent is not innate, but acquired; if at all it was innate, some of the people who were considered to be poor performers at some point could have performed greatly at a later stage. This implies that Great Performance is in people’s hands and not what most people assume. The gifts possessed by the best performers are not at all what we think they are. They are certainly not enough to explain the achievements of such people - and that is if these gifts exist at all. Some researchers now argue that specifically targeted innate abilities are simply fiction. That is, you

⁴⁵ Papierno BP, Ceci JS, Makel CM, Williams MW, 2005. The Nature and Nurture of Talent

⁴⁶ Gallardo-Gallardo E, 2013. What is the Meaning of Talent in the World of Work. Human Resource Management Review.

⁴⁷ Coyle D, 2009. The Talent Code: Greatness isn’t born, it’s grown. Here is how.

are not a natural-born clarinet virtuoso or car salesman or bond trader or brain surgeon - because no one is.

Every human skill, whether it is playing baseball or playing Bach, is created by chains of nerve fibres carrying a tiny electrical impulse — basically, a signal travelling through a circuit. Myelin's vital role is to wrap those nerve fibres the same way that rubber insulation wraps a copper wire, making the signal stronger and faster by preventing the electrical impulses from leaking out. When we fire our circuits in the right way, when we practice swinging that bat or playing that note, our myelin responds by wrapping layers of insulation around that neural circuit, each new layer adding a bit more skill and speed. The thicker the myelin gets, the better it insulates, and the faster it is the more accurate.⁴⁸

Myelin is important for several reasons. It is universal that is everyone can grow it, most swiftly during childhood but also throughout life. It is indiscriminate; its growth enables all manner of skills, mental and physical. Additionally, it is imperceptible; we cannot see it or feel it, and we can sense its increase only by its magical-seeming effects. Most of all, however, myelin is important because it provides us with a vivid new model for understanding skill. Skill is a cellular insulation that wraps neural circuits and that grows in response to certain signals. The more time and energy you put in the right kind of practice, the longer you stay in the Clarissa zone, firing the right signals through your circuits and the more skill you get, the more myelin you earn. All skill acquisitions, and, therefore, all talent hotbeds, operate on the same principles of action, no matter how different they may appear to be.⁴⁹

The idea that all skills grow by the same cellular mechanism seems strange and surprising because the skills are so varied. Although all the sports and art of entertainment performers do not appear to have things in common, they all get better by gradually improving timing, speed and accuracy, by honing neural circuitry, by obeying the rules of the talent code and by growing more myelin.

The survey, which was conducted on the long-distance athletes, reveals that talented athletes have to perform at a high level from a young age to develop a successful sporting career. This indicates well-developed characteristics such as anthropometric, physiological, technical, tactical and psychological skills. It is also stated that the sport performance can be enhanced

⁴⁸ Coyle D, 2009. The Talent Code. Greatness isn't born, it's grown. Here is how.

⁴⁹ Coyle D, 2009. The Talent Code. Greatness isn't born, it's grown. Here is how.

by the improvement in the psychological skills coupled with the development in the cognitive anxiety and self confidence. Further, the results showed that the talented athletes possessed higher psychological skills than the less talented among the testing variables. The psychological testing variables which were used are adversity, pressure, goal-setting, concentration, confidence, coach ability and coping ability, which differentiated the two groups significantly.⁵⁰

Going beyond the question of specific innate gifts, even the general abilities that we typically believe characterise the greats are not the mystery we think or assume to be. In many realms such as chess, music, business, medicine, it is assumed that the outstanding performers must possess staggering intelligence or gigantic memories. Some do, but many do not. For example, some people have become international chess masters although they possess below-average IQs. So, whatever it is that makes these people special, does not depend on superhuman general abilities.⁵¹

Another point that shows that natural talent and ability phenomena reinforce the opposite view is that talent is as a result of deliberate intense practice as it is not even linked to mental ability or IQ. It also shows that talent in one area does not translate into exceptional ability in another area or faculty. Ericsson found that the measure of basic mental capacities is not valid predictors of attainment or expert performance in a domain. Ericsson also found that the superior performance of experts is often very domain specific, and transfers outside their narrow area of expertise are surprisingly limited. Mainly, the attributes that are observed in most of the individuals who have shown exceptional performance is as the result of training that have been undertaken in their careers.⁵²

Deliberate practice requires that one identify certain sharply defined elements of performance that need to be improved, and then work intently on them. Examples are everywhere. The great soprano Joan Sutherland devoted countless hours to practicing her trill; and not just the basic trill, but the many different types (whole tone, semitone, baroque). Tiger Woods has been seen to drop golf balls. Identifying the learning zone, which is not simple, and then forcing one to

⁵⁰ Kruger A, 2012. The importance of psychological characteristics in potentially talented adolescent long distance runners.

⁵¹ Coyle D, 2009. The Talent Code. Greatness isn't born, it's grown. Here is how

⁵² Vopat MC, 2011. Magnet schools, innate talent and social justice.

stay continuously in it as it changes, which is even harder. These are the first and most important characteristics of deliberate practice.

Deliberate practice is above all an effort of focus and concentration. That is what makes it "deliberate," as distinct from the mindless playing of scales or hitting of tennis balls that most people engage in. Considering that deliberate practice is so demanding and in itself unrewarding, and that high achievement demands thousands of hours of it over a period of many years, some people put themselves through it while most do not.

The whole notion of deliberate practice has for many people created a notion of a nature-versus-nurture battle, with practice advocates pitted against proponents of the divine-spark hypothesis. However, it is important to note that advocates of the deliberate practice framework have never excluded the possibility of a genetic role in high-level performance. Their stance has been that they have not yet seen the evidence supporting it. Certainly, if we're looking for specific DNA components that make someone an exceptional oboist or fighter pilot or salesperson or, to put the same idea another way, if we're seeking specific DNA that limits a particular person's ability to excel in these fields, then the search has been futile. Practice proponents do not dispute the possibility that genes could play a role in a person's willingness to put himself or herself through the extremely rigorous demands of becoming an exceptional performer.

By contrast, great performers never allow themselves to reach the automatic, arrested development stage in their chosen field. That is, the effect of continual deliberate practice—avoiding automaticity. The essence of practice, which is constantly trying to do the things one cannot do comfortably, makes automatic behaviour impossible. It is certainly true that a great performer is able to do many things in his or her field with far fewer mental demands than a novice performer; an excellent pilot lands a 747 without breaking a sweat. But ultimately, the performance is always conscious and controlled, not automatic.

The differences in the ability of the individuals is as a result of the initial effects which are ascribed as Mathew effects which states that initial advantage begets future advantage (i.e. the richer gets richer and the poor get poorer). It is the same with the differences in the abilities. There are those who argue that there exists no evidentiary basis for innate talent and that expertise in any domain can be explained by intense practice and coaching. In fact, one of the core tenets of this position is the assertion that deliberate practice for extended periods of time is the driving force behind expert performance. It is the multiplier effects which act through reciprocal interactions between the individual and what they engage in pave developmental

pathways to high ability. The other point is that the initial conditions derived from combinations of inherited and non-inherited traits, determine one's maximum potential outcome.⁵³

2.3.2 Talent as acquired ability

The argument that talent is an acquired ability is stronger than it might be imagined. Many studies of accomplished individuals have tried to figure out the key elements of their achievements, in part by interviewing the individuals and their parents, as in the English music study mentioned earlier. In these studies, all the subjects are people who say, they are very talented.” Yet over and over, the researchers found few signs of precocious achievement before the individuals started intensive training. Such signs did occur occasionally, but in the large majority of cases they didn't. We can all think of examples of people who seemed to be highly talented, but when researchers have looked at large numbers of high achievers, at least in certain fields, most of the people who became extremely good in their field did not show early evidence of gifts. Similar findings have turned up in studies of musicians, tennis players, artists, swimmers, and mathematicians. Of course, such findings do not prove that talent does not exist, but they suggest an intriguing possibility that if it does, it may be irrelevant.

There seems not to be empirical evidence of great performance to be a result of innate abilities. It is purely the intense deliberate practice which other people do not want to engage in. That is why a lot of people are average and only a few are the top performers as they take a lot of effort to perfect the art of what they do.⁵⁴

A number of researchers now argue that giftedness or talent means nothing like what we think it means, if indeed it means anything at all. A few contend that the very existence of talent is not, as they carefully put it, supported by evidence.

Once training begins, we would suppose that talent would certainly show itself; for example, after only three piano lessons, a talented child would be playing pieces that other kids need six months to learn. However, this does not happen reliably in people who go on to achieve a great deal. In a study of outstanding American pianists, for example, you could not have predicted their eventual high level of achievement even after they had been training intensively for six years; at that point, most of them still weren't standing out from their peers. In retrospect, we

⁵³ Papierno BP, Ceci JS, Makel CM, Williams MW, 2005. The Nature and Nurture of Talent

⁵⁴ Colvin G, 2008. Talent is overrated. What really separates world class performers from everyone else?

could say all of them were “talented,” but talent is looking like an odd concept if it has not made itself known after six years of hard study.

Even those few cases in which parents do report early, spontaneous signs of talent turn out to be problematic. Various researchers have found cases of children who reportedly spoke or read at extremely early ages, but they then found that the parents were deeply involved in the children’s development and stimulation. Given the extraordinarily close relationship between parents and small children, it is challenging to say what originates where. You might suppose that in the age of genomic research, there should no longer be any question about precisely what is innate and what is not. Since talent is by definition innate, there should be a gene (or genes) for it. The difficulty is that scientists have not yet figured out what each of the twenty-thousand-plus human genes does. All that can be said for the moment is that no specific genes that identify particular talents have been found.

The gifts possessed by the best performers are not at all what we think they are. They are certainly not enough to explain the achievements of such people and that is if these gifts exist at all. Some researchers now argue that specifically targeted innate abilities are simply fiction. That is, you are not a natural-born clarinet virtuoso or car salesman or bond trader or brain surgeon—because no one is. Not all researchers are prepared to accept that view, but the talent advocates have a surprisingly difficult time demonstrating that even those natural gifts they believe they can substantiate are particularly important in attaining great performance.⁵⁵

2.3.3 Talent as a result of early engagement

There has been a lot of research with regard to Mozart the famous musician’s achievement in comparison to his contemporaries at the time. The results of this research show that Mozart’s performance was exceptional and most of the researchers refer to it as inborn but what is usually forgotten is that his tutelage started way before he was four years old. He was under the tutelage of his father who was a skilled composer, renowned music teacher and had written a number of books on violin instruction. The exceptional violinist Mozart came from the long training from his dedicated father and he was exposed at an early age which made him to perfect his Art. This shows that talent is not inborn but it is just developed.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Howe M, Davidson J, Sloboda J, 1998. Innate talents. Reality or myth?

⁵⁶ Howe M, Davidson J, Sloboda J, 1998. Innate talents. Reality or myth?

Apart from training and practice which form the core of the exceptional ability as explained above, it is actually early engagement in the training activities that helps to develop talent. If there is no meaningful push from someone else and with no resources, the child is unlikely to take an interest in an activity. Additionally, family support and dedicated teachers or trainers are important in promoting talent development. By implication, this means that children with less exposure and fewer opportunities are less likely to achieve the same levels of expertise as children engaged and supported at the early stage. This also means that talent is not innate, but acquired. However, the question then is if talent is not innate, how do we then explain the exceptional ability? Michael Howe explains in answering this question, that the children who exhibit most talent are those who have had most training and practice. It has also been found by various researchers that there are differences in performance in non-talented and those perceived to be innately talented. The best available predictor of expertise is the amount of time an individual dedicated to the intense practice and training of a particular talent coupled with the support from the parents and quality training provided by the trainers. In addition to this, there should be a high level of discipline which should be exhibited by the “talented” children or individuals.⁵⁷

It was the child’s small successes and interest in the early learning in a talent field that teachers and parents noted. It was these small successes that resulted in the child’s increasing interest and greater commitment to the talent field, the parent’s increase of encouragement and support for the child, and the search for better teachers and better learning experiences in the talent field. These early minor achievements, rather than evidence of unusual gifts and qualities, were the basis for providing the child with further opportunities to develop in the talent field.⁵⁸

The factor that seems to explain the most about great performance is something the researchers call deliberate practice. Exactly what that is and is not, turns out to be extremely important. It is definitely not what most individuals do on the job every day, which begins to explain the great mystery of the workplace. If this was, the question one would ask is why we are surrounded by so many people who have worked hard for decades but have never achieved greatness. Deliberate practice is also not what most of us do when we think we're practicing

⁵⁷ Howe M, Davidson J, Sloboda J, 1998e. Innate talents: Reality or myth

⁵⁸ Bloom BS, 1985. Developing Talent in Young People.

golf or any of our other interests. Deliberate practice is hard. More of it leads to better performance. Tons of it equals great performance.⁵⁹

Much as there has been a lot research on deliberate practice, it has also been observed that deliberate practice is a large concept, and to say that it explains everything would be simplistic and reductive. Critical questions immediately present themselves: What exactly needs to be practiced? Precisely how should it be practiced? Which specific skills or other assets must be acquired? The research has revealed answers that generalise quite well across a wide range of fields. It certainly seems daunting to seek a common explanation for greatness in ballet and medical diagnosis, or insurance sales and baseball, but a few key factors do seem to account for top performance in those realms and many more.⁶⁰

One of the most important questions about greatness surrounds the difficulty of deliberate practice. The chief constraint is mental, regardless of the field; even in sports, where we might think the physical demands are the hardest. Across realms, the required concentration is so intense that it is exhausting. If deliberate practice is so hard, if in most cases it is "not inherently enjoyable," as some of the top researchers say, then why do some people put themselves through it day after day for decades, while most do not? Where does the necessary passion come from? In attempting to answer these questions, one could argue that if the belief is that people without a particular natural talent for some activity will never be very good at it, or at least will never be competitive with those who possess that talent, then such people should be directed away from that activity.⁶¹

One of the research outcomes suggests that whatever it is that an IQ test, measures, it is not the ability to engage in cognitively complex forms of multivariate reasoning. The phrase multivariate reasoning is not one that most people use very often, but it is actually a very good description of what most of people do every day in their working lives, and what the best

⁵⁹ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

⁶⁰ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

⁶¹ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

performers do extremely well. You just don't have to be especially "smart," as the term smart is traditionally defined; you have to practice doing it.⁶²

Similar results turn up in a wide range of fields. For example, in chess — another realm that business people feel is a lot like their own — IQ does not reliably predict performance. This seems hard to believe, since chess is generally thought of as an exercise in pure brain power. Researchers have also found that some chess grand masters have IQs that are below normal. It is a similar story with Go, the Japanese game that is at least as complex as chess. Also, surprisingly, some top Scrabble players score below average on tests of verbal ability.

Even when performance does match up with IQ in a way we would expect, the effect tends to be short-lived. That is, even if high-IQ people do better than low-IQ people when first trying a task that is new to them, the relationship tends to get weaker and may eventually disappear consequently.

It has been observed that in spite of the lack of talent and early musical interest by some of the students who exhibited superior performance, early exposure and contribution coupled with encouragement from friends and family results in superior performance and realisation of talent. The research further reveals that the success faculty of life not always depends on the encouragement from friends and family or those close to an individual, but also on the determination endowment of an individual. Such individuals perform well in spite of the opposition from family and friends. It is this confluence of attributions that earns students' pattern the "maverick" characterisation.⁶³

2.3.4 Talent as memory

Research on IQ strongly suggests that the link between intelligence and high achievement is not nearly as powerful as is commonly supposed. Most importantly, the research tells us that intelligence as we usually think of it — a high IQ — is not a prerequisite to extraordinary achievement. On memory, many studies have confirmed that apparently average people can achieve extraordinary memory ability by developing their own retrieval structures or been given them by researchers.⁶⁴

⁶² Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us: Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

⁶³ Evans R.J, Bickel R., Pendarvis ED, 2000. Musical Talent: Innate or Acquired?

⁶⁴ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

A different type of research reinforces the finding that memory is developed, not innate. World-class chess players, in addition to being considered awesomely smart, are generally assumed to have superhuman memories, and with good reason. Champions routinely put on exhibitions in which they play lesser opponents, while blindfolded; they hold the entire chessboard in their heads.⁶⁵

In short, the widespread view that highly accomplished people have tremendous memories is in one sense justified — they often astound us with what they can remember. But the view that their amazing ability is a rare natural gift is not justified.⁶⁶

When excellent musicians or typists look further ahead on the page than average performers do, they are literally looking into their own future. Knowing what lies ahead for them, they prepare for it and thus perform better. They may be looking only one second ahead, but for them, that extra moment makes all the difference. In other fields, the time periods are obviously much greater, and the advantages just as important.

The skills and abilities one can choose to develop are infinite, but the opportunities to practice them fall into two general categories: opportunities to practice directly, apart from the actual use of the skill or ability, the way a musician practices a piece before performing it; and opportunities to practice as part of the work itself.

Excellent performers judge themselves differently from the way other people do. They are more specific, just as they are when they set goals and strategies.

2.3.5 Talent as an attitude

If you were pushing yourself appropriately and have evaluated yourself rigorously, then you will have identified errors that you made. A critical part of self-evaluation is deciding what caused the errors. Average performers believe their errors were caused by factors outside their control. My opponent got lucky; the task was too hard; I just don't have any natural ability for this, they would say. Top performers, by contrast, believe they are responsible for their errors. Note that this is not just a difference of personality or attitude. Recall that the best performers

⁶⁵ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

⁶⁶ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

have set highly specific, technique-based goals and strategies for themselves; they have thought through exactly how they intend to achieve what they want.⁶⁷

In addition to finding opportunities to practice skills directly as well as in the midst of their work, people in the business world can pursue one or more category of activities that utilise the principles of great performance to get better at what they do. We have seen how deep domain knowledge is fundamental to top-level performance. You do not have to wait for that knowledge to come your way in the course of your work.⁶⁸

Imagine the difference if you made domain knowledge a direct objective rather than a by-product of work. If one set a goal of becoming an expert in their business, they would immediately start doing all kinds of things they had not done before. One would study the history of the business, identify today's leading experts, read everything they can find, interview people inside and outside their organisation who could provide new perspectives, and track key statistics and trends.

The opportunity is richer than you may expect. Michael Porter, the Harvard Business School professor who is one of the all-time great authorities on corporate strategy, prepares rigorously for his consulting assignments by studying the client company and its industry. He once argued that with twenty hours of library research (this was pre-Internet) he could know as much about the business as the CEO did. Of course, Porter has spent many years learning what data to look for, so maybe it would take you forty hours. That still looks like a high-return investment.⁶⁹

The intense deliberate practice and extended period of practice has also been the evidence of most of the people who have attained excellence or superior performance. The individuals who have displayed exceptional performance do not really have innate gifts or talents, but their track record has shown engagement in intense deliberate practice. It all goes back to the passion, endurance and commitment one possesses.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

⁶⁸ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

⁶⁹ Porter M, 1980. Competitive Strategy. Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors.

⁷⁰ Papierno BP, Ceci JS, Makel CM, Williams MW, 2005. The Nature and Nurture of Talent

2.4 Talent as an acquired ability – Environmental

A number of studies have shown that talent is acquired and the tenet of this acquisition of talent has been the environmental effects. The environmental influence is so strong that it does not overcome what is believed to be a natural endowment or lack of potential. The environment in which someone makes him or her to thrive because the set up accommodates the facilities, opportunities, the right culture and basically support from the people around. It is for this reason that the environmental factors play a very big role in tightening the fibre of the talent development.⁷¹

“Our present findings point to the conclusion that exceptional levels of talent development require certain types of environmental support, special experiences, excellent teaching, and appropriate motivational encouragement at each stage of development. No matter what the quality of the initial gifts is, each of the individuals that were studied went through many years of special development under the care of attentive parents and the tutelage and supervision of a remarkable series of teachers and coaches.”⁷²

The connection of genes and environment has been discussed in behavioural sciences, genetics and the conclusion by some sections is that, even if IQ scores are highly heritable among both Blacks and Whites, the difference in IQ scores between the two scores may be entirely environmental in origin. The individual's genetic makeup plays a significant role in the developmental outcome; yet, the respective outcomes and their consequences are quite different and dependent upon the available environments. This difference, then, is due purely to environmental factors, even though the given individual may have actively sought out leadership positions because of his/her genetic makeup.⁷³

The other approach of looking at talent is the context and environment in which an individual operates. This implies that talent is relative and not absolute and subjective rather than objective. From this school of thought, the construct of talent implies that the immediate environment helps someone to find their fit in an organisation as the leadership, culture and other organisational environmental factors may affect the individual's performance. It is not a guarantee that if someone is a performer in one organisation they will be a performer in another

⁷¹ Papierno BP, Ceci JS, Makel CM, Williams MW, 2005. *The Nature and Nurture of Talent*

⁷² Bloom BS, 1985. *Developing Talent in Young People*. New York: Ballantine Books.

⁷³ Coll CG, Bearer EL, Lerner RM, 2004, 2004. *Nature and Nurture: The complex Interplay of Genetics and Environmental Influence on Human Behaviour and Development*

organisation. This also applies to sport; if someone is a star in team ‘A’, he may not be a star with the same disposition in team B or another country. We have seen football players perform well in the Brazilian league, but fail to adapt and perform in the English league. The style of play may be different and this can affect the performance of play.⁷⁴

Talent of any kind is present in all the population regardless of the economic status or environment one is in. Coleman gives an example that talent with the computer language cannot exist in a nomadic society or pre-industrial society, but talent with abstract symbols was possible in some agrarian society.⁷⁵ This implies that every human being has got the ability to be talented at anything as long it is within the faculty or discipline that relates to the current happening of the society such that society will appreciate and recognise the talent. It can also be deduced that talent is a product of social context just like songs or theories. Someone becomes talented as a result of the opportunity, circumstance and the exposure one has. The question is what influences an individual to perform better than his or her peers?

It has been noted that some people perform better or appear to be highly talented than their cohort. This is because opportunities and circumstances that unfolds to each and every individual are different, hence the difference in the ability to deliver. A person is fortunate to be in a situation where there is a fit or match between his or her talent potential and the opportunity for learning in an area.⁷⁶ Even Coleman expressed that the opportunity is appreciated when it appears at an appropriate time in the development of a certain talent otherwise it will be reticent.⁷⁷

In essence, it is the right conditions and environment which lead to differences in the capability. The Keynesian economic theory indicates that multiplier effects have been used to explain how small fluctuations in government spending can result in much larger changes in total output. Similarly, in the context of human psychology and behavioural development, multiplier effects are used to explain how small changes in an individual or in a society — whether genetically or environmentally induced — can be the impetus for a series of reciprocal interactions between individuals and their environments that ultimately results in huge differences. Under the right conditions, these interactions may result in more highly developed phenotypic

⁷⁴ Coleman L, 2006. Talent Development in Economically Disadvantaged Populations.

⁷⁵ Coleman L, 2006. Talent Development in Economically Disadvantaged Populations.

⁷⁶ Feldman DH, 1994. Beyond Universals in cognitive Development.

⁷⁷ Coleman L, 2006. Talent Development in Economically Disadvantaged Populations.

outcomes than being present at the introduction of the initial small change. In short, the message of multiplier effects is that a small input may yield substantial outputs.⁷⁸

Tannenbaum expressed that “there are no known limits to the kinds of talent the human Psyche can demonstrate and the heights to which it can climb in any talent domain. But the mind is not motivated to achieve every possible form of excellence. The cultural milieu makes that decision in the broadest possible sense”.⁷⁹ From this, it means we can deduce that it is the circumstance or the environment which influences the development of any talent. As Coleman puts it, it is not the personal decision or the so-called innate ability that influences talent development⁸⁰ it is more to do with the culture, family and the society that influences the talent development. The environment in which someone finds themselves dictates the extent of effort to realise the expected benefits.

Even in Africa, we have seen very good football players who have failed to tick in the English league, but are able to perform well in our African league. The closest example would be Collins Mbesuma Zambia Striker who was playing for Kaiser Chiefs and became the top scorer and was awarded the Golden boot in the South African league in the year 2006. When he moved to Portsmouth in England, he could not perform as expected and his contract with the club was not renewed when the contract ended.

According to a number of researchers, in families that seem to produce more talented individuals have shown that the environment in which the child was raised accounts for his or her ability, and not the genetic pool from which they came. What has been found is that the initial natural talent attributed to individuals across disciplines had very little if anything to do with their success later in life.⁸¹

It appears that what makes exceptional performers to perform at one’s level best is mainly the motivation to solve the available problems they encounter in a situation and get satisfaction at the end. Also, many studies by scientists have shown similar findings that they get energised by the new problems and find rewards in the solution as well as in the process of seeking a solution. Talent is not innate, but specific and comes as a consequence of applying more general

⁷⁸ Papierno BP, Ceci JS, Makel CM, Williams MW, 2005. The Nature and Nurture of Talent

⁷⁹ Tannenbaum A, 2000. A history of giftedness in school and society.

⁸⁰ Coleman L, 2006. Talent Development in Economically Disadvantaged Populations.

⁸¹ Vopat CM, 2011. Magnet Schools, Innate Talent and Social Justice.

skills in a particular area of specialisation which is a result of parental pressure, opportunity, exposure and so forth.⁸²

Whether or not a talent is ultimately developed depends on many factors, including ability, creativity, effort and motivation to achieve, societal support and appreciation of the talent area, environmental support and opportunities, and chance or luck. The extracurricular activities outside the school programmes help to build and shape talent, especially the support from the parents as well as the society in which one lives. It has been observed that the psychological development of outstanding talent development over a long period of time is also influenced by a number of individual factors, including personal characteristics of the talented person and a strong support system. In the majority of the cases, Bloom found that a positive family environment existed with parents or other family members who had a personal interest in the talent field providing strong support, encouragement, and rewards for developing the talent. In fact, family members assumed and took for granted that a child's talent would be identified and developed as part of the family's lifestyle, especially between the ages of three and seven.

It has also been argued that much as the external factors play a big role in talent identification and development, there is a risk of failure if both talent identification and development programmes are rigid and over-structured by failing to consider individual, environmental and task constraints. What will be an enabling environment is the one where the programmes are accommodating to ensure that there is a discovery process by the learners as this will produce flexible and adaptable performers who will be able to display their talent. This implies that in all the talent related programmes, there should be room to ensure that talented individuals are able to manoeuvre within their skill for full completeness.⁸³

Contrary to what we have been taught, genes do not determine physical and character traits on their own. Rather, they interact with their environment in a dynamic, ongoing process that produces and continually refines an individual.

2.4.1 Genes and environment

It has been explained that there are no genes that can be studied with no comparison to the environment and further that there are no environmental factors that function independently from the genes. It has also been believed from time in memorial that individuals inherit

⁸² Howe M, Davidson J, Sloboda J, 1998. Innate talents: Reality or myth?

⁸³ Baker J, Cobley S, Schorer J, 2012. Talent Identification and Development in Sport. International Perspectives

complex traits from their parents' DNAs. The belief about genes as hereditary is not true and cannot hold any water as some of the proponents of the same theory are still struggling to understand the causal relationship.⁸⁴

It is very crucial and imperative to understand that genes are not inherited, but are the interaction with the environment which is a process. As the genes interact with the environment, they create the traits for that environment. Everything that has been said about genes appears not to be true as some of the traits which are referred to, are physical appearances, such as blue eyes, tall, short and the like.⁸⁵

Most of the proponents of innate intelligence have never even understood what intelligence is. Intelligence has got a lot to do with a paradigm which is the mental map of routes that have been created by interacting with the society and the environment. That is why IQ scores in the previous decade are different from our time.⁸⁶

“Like intelligence, talents are not innate gifts but the result of a slow, invisible accretion of skills developed from the moment of conception. Everyone is born with differences and some with unique advantages for certain tasks. But no one is genetically designed into greatness and few are biologically restricted from attaining it.” – David Shank.

There has never been a scientist who has discovered a gene for a certain talent. Talent is basically developed through practice and not just practice, but deep mind provoking kind of practice. The individual needs to be deeply connected to the task at hand and the frustrations of failure will make the person practice even more in order for the that person to achieve the required level of achievement. It is actually the deep connection in practice that differentiates exceptional performance and mediocre performance. Additionally, for one to be recognised exceptional in performance or as talented, he or she should have invested enormous, life altering amounts of time, a daily grinding commitment to becoming better. Becoming great at something requires the right combination of resources applicable to the task or discipline such as mentality, strategies, persistence and time as long as the individual is physically advantaged

⁸⁴ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of Us: Why Everything you have Been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

⁸⁵ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of Us: Why Everything you have Been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

⁸⁶ Vopat CM, 2011. Magnet Schools, Innate Talent and Social Justice

for that endeavour.⁸⁷

What has to be learnt is that managers, teachers and students must take long incremental approaches regardless of the traits that an individual portrays. The skill could be exceptional, mediocre or even non-existent, but what should be clear is that the potential exist for that person to become exceptional at what they do. This essentially means that childhood abilities are not purely determinants of success.

Another important aspect which helps in the development of a talent is the role the parents play in bringing up the child. Much as parents are helpful in realising their children's discipline, orderliness, education and way of interacting with other people, they play a very important and key role in producing the required talent, especially if they believe their kids posses an extraordinary potential. It is a tendency in most parents to show affection and extra love to their kids when they achieve something, and to show disappointment when the kids do not perform to the expectation of the parent. This makes a child to reciprocate by working hard as he or she would always want to please his or her parents. Some parents do not show displeasure at their children when they fail, but encourage them to do better in the next exercise.⁸⁸

What parents need to do is to develop talent in their children and to support them so as to set the pace and persistency in their children. When a child is persistent he or she is likely to endeavour when he or she has no rewards or if the results do not favour him or her. It is also cardinal for children to embrace failure in their life and this, mostly, will come from the way their parents have been nurturing them; otherwise the grumble when faced with an obstacle would disturb their ego and they may give up.

Former President of the United States of America, Barak Obama once said:

That's a philosophy of persistence...is one that am going to be emphasising again and again in the months and years to come, as long as I am in this office. I am a big believer of persistence. I think that...if we keep on working at it, if we acknowledge that we make mistakes sometimes, and that we don't always have the right answer, and that we are inheriting knotty problems, that we can pass health care, we can find better solutions to our energy challenges, we can teach our children more

⁸⁷ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

⁸⁸ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

effectively...I am sure there will be more criticisms and we will have to make more adjustments, but we are moving in the right direction. – President Barack Obama

It is very important to understand that apart from the parents and peers, the society has got a very big role to play in fostering the culture of excellence. There should be a culture of excellence and everyone in a given society, to understand that nothing is impossible as the reverse would hinder development or the culture of persistence.

Genes do not dictate what we are to become, but instead they are actors in the dynamic process. Genes are modulated by external factors differently from what we have observed. Everything we encounter in our world can be changed by individuals and shaped by individuals. The genius in all of us is our built-in ability to improve ourselves and our world.⁸⁹

The other school of thought on talent believes that every human being is talented. Biologists often talk about the ‘ecology’ of an organism: the tallest oak in the forest is not the tallest just because it grew from the hardiest acorn: it is the tallest because no others blocked its sunlight, the soil around it was deep and rich, no rabbit chewed through its bark as a sapling, and no lumberjack cut it down before it matured. This implies that from this statement it is the environmental factors that matters most and nothing to do with innate ability. Crucially, it is the environment in which talented people operate that allows them to develop their potential and succeed. The organisation gives them access to opportunity and encouragement. The challenge for leaders and organisations is to find the right people and then help them to go even further than they might have thought possible. And given the shortfall in skills in today’s labour market, it is the task of the leader to create an environment where the latent talents in the whole workforce can be realised.⁹⁰

2.4.2 Talent and cultural differences

Identical twins often have striking similarities, but for reasons far beyond their genetic profiles, they can also have surprising and often overlooked differences.

“Twins are fascinating products of their interaction between genes and environment; this has been missed by heredity studies and has been widely misinterpreted. In reality, twin studies do

⁸⁹ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong.

⁹⁰ Davies J, Koudi J, 2010. The Truth about Talent. a guide to building a dynamic workforce, realising potential and helping leaders succeed

not reveal any percentage of direct genetic influence and tell us absolutely nothing about individual potential.” - David Shank⁹¹

Analysts of human cloning have come to realise that identical genes do not produce identical human beings. The identical twins despite being brought up in the same uterus or the same family will have different personalities. The major culprits are scientists who have held on to the old genetic hereditary theory and this has made the public to believe that genes produce the same traits without considering the environmental effects. It has been discovered that cultural differences in twins, especially plays a vital role, such as same age, sex, ethnicity, social, economic and cultural experiences.

A research which was done by a psychologist W.J. Wyatt, who assembled college students who were completely not related to one another were placed in pairs on the basis of sex and age. The research showed that one pair revealed identical characteristics in terms of preferences which were exactly the same from religion denomination to personal lifestyles. Environments play a critical role in someone’s growth and this affects how people respond to life situations and career orientations.

Over the course of time, it has been noticed that the mind is of paramount importance to the development of human endeavour or success. If the society or an organisation wants to develop or advance the culture of success in human exposition, it should not go further than changing the mindset of people involved.

It has been observed over the course of time in almost all fields or sports faculties that performance has improved from generation to generation and this has been as a result of training intensity and methods as well as competitiveness and desire. It also has to do with the extreme cultural involvement and devotion to do more and take risks with expectations of doing better.

Shank has disputed the notion that talent is innate and has gone further to state that thinking of talent is convenient for people as it makes the world more manageable and more comfortable. It also makes people less expectant and avoids distressing comparisons with the exceptional performers. It is imperative and important for all to understand that no one was born a thief, but it is the society that makes someone be who he or she is. This has been echoed by Shank

⁹¹ Shank D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

that we do not really have control over the environment and in most cases; we conform to the cultural norms. The typical example is the food we eat; we normally eat what our family, neighbours, communities and nations eat. We find that the food we eat differs from country to country and it is difficult to adapt because that is we are used to. This also applies to the language, habit, philosophical notions, social infrastructure, and expectations.

2.4.3 Talent as motivation

Talent, these researchers learned, was developed and affected by contextual factors in the environment. Talent was nurtured by the acquisition of knowledge of the domain, the motivation provided by the family and persons in the specialised field of talent, and discipline created by a set of habits resulting in long-term concentrated study and superior performance. It was also observed that the children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds had higher levels of enthusiasm and optimism than those from the affluent background. The fear of pain of failure pushes them to concentrate on improving their talents.⁹²

It has been observed that the following are some of the things that have made a lot of people to perform exceptionally well.

Find your own motivation: For most of the people who have achieved much in their careers, it has been as a result of the intensity of the effort they have put and not that things were easy for them. One needs to be in a position of wanting something so badly that he or she has to forgo most of the enjoyment or leaving the comfort zones to achieve what they want in life. As long as someone has forgone the motivation to achieve something, they will definitely achieve it.

Be your own toughest critic: Improvements in all human endeavours have come with critics by questioning oneself on the achievements that have been made and how they can be done better. For one to aspire more, there is apparent questioning on doing better from the previous achievement and this makes people to practice more and more hence, improving on the knowledge and skills. This can be seen even in today's fastest sprinter Usain Bolt, he keeps on improving.

Beware of the dark side: for one to be the greatest you need to take failure as an opportunity to improve on next time as defeat or failure can have a negative effect on someone. The feeling of regret can make someone lose focus on the issue at hand that is why it is imperative to have

⁹² Reis S, 2009. Ten thousand hours of practice, musical aptitude and inner fire. Developing musical talent in young people

foresight in order to avoid the negatives. Additionally, and most importantly, is for one to know and understand their limitations and ignore them to pursue their endeavour otherwise focusing on them may not lead one to the required excellence.

2.5 Talent as an acquired ability – organisational perspective

It is very crucial and vital for managers in organisations to understand that the skills, knowledge and talent are different elements of a person's performance, as skills and knowledge can be taught whereas talent cannot be taught because it is said to be innate. However, when it comes to organisations, talent is referred to as recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behaviour that can be productively applied. That is to say, the best organisations assign people to jobs in much the same way that sports coaches or music teachers choose exercises for their students—to push them just beyond their current capabilities and build the skills that are most important. Building people through job assignments seems obvious in theory, but in practice it is tough. Organisations tend to assign people based on what they are already good at, not what they need to work on. Deliberately putting managers into stretchy jobs that will require them to learn and grow is the central development technique of the most successful organisations.

In business, it is overwhelmingly clear that standards of performance will continue to rise more relentlessly than they have in the past, thus increasing the value of great performance. This because organisations such as InfoTech have given customers unprecedented power, and with that power customers are demanding more. As buyers, we receive more information when purchasing stuff from online than has been before.⁹³

If one looks at the way profits are realised in organisations, one will be able to understand that profit is as a result of the human capital in the organisation and nothing else. Microsoft and Google understand perfectly well that their success is built on human capital. Both companies are famous for the scorching intelligence of the people they hire and for the brutally rigorous tests they impose on job applicants. Bill Gates has said that if you took the twenty smartest people out of Microsoft, it would be an insignificant company, and if you ask around the company what its core competency is, they do not say anything about software. They say it is hiring. They know what the scarce resource is.⁹⁴

⁹³ Colvin G, 2008. Talent is overrated: what really separates world class performers from everyone else

⁹⁴ Colvin G, 2008. Talent is overrated: what really separates world class performers from everyone else

Talent has been disputed to be innate as talents do not just arrive with us ready-made. Talents are not pre-packaged and imposed upon us. They are not fixed and predetermined, but as people we have a natural predisposition to learn and create our own talents. We limit our own learning when we think of intelligence as something that is fixed, innate and measurable. Human beings can achieve far more if they consider intelligence as incremental or as something that grows as we practice.⁹⁵

2.5.1 Commitment as talent

Further, as a counter argument of talent as inborn, it has been realised by some scholars that talent can come about as a result of one's commitment towards a task or assignment that has been given to him or her. From this understanding, talent is seen to be nothing but the will, perseverance, motivation, interest and passion of an individual who has aligned his goals to the organisation's goals. In viewing talent as commitment, there is a view that commitment is not equal to talent, but a supplement to the talent disposition and not to talent itself.⁹⁶

Talent needs to be cultivated into the employees for them to be considered talented. Each and every organisation has got cultures and specific competencies which, when one attains, he or she can be considered to be a top talented person for that organisation. If talent is innate, how can it lead to derailment or non-performance of an individual? Ross⁹⁷ also explained that when talented leadership fail to live to their potential, the perception of HR, business leaders and peers is that these individuals had no potential in the first place. Ross further stated that talented leadership stops performing to the best of their ability due to low emotional intelligence, personal traits and leveraging of their strengths and weakness while in transition to the new promotional role. If someone can be considered a top talent today and tomorrow he is considered non-performer then talent cannot be innate.

2.5.2 Talent as execution trait

With regard to organisations, talent refers to those individuals who effectively and efficiently contribute to the organisation with exception. These are employees who are considered to perform significantly beyond their expectations. Even Nilsson⁹⁸ argues that the term talent

⁹⁵ Cripps L, 2012. How can I clarify my responsibility as a head teacher as I provide opportunities to enable all children in the school to create talents?

⁹⁶ Gallardo-Gallardo E, 2013. What is the meaning of talent in the world of work

⁹⁷ Ross S, 2013. "How definitions of talent suppress talent management?"

refers to people who contribute to organisational performance or the performance of the individuals. There is also a close definition to Nilsson's which states that talent in an organisation refers to all the employees employed in a particular organisation with distinct levels of knowledge, skill and ability.⁹⁹ In some organisations, the definition of talent is not clear, but the one who is considered to be talented is the one who exceptionally achieves the business' set objectives. Without clarity on the definition of talent, result indicates that there is a lack of proper talent development programmes or change orders in the implementation of talent management programmes.

In learning institutions, one of the talent initiatives implored to develop talent is coaching. Coaching facilitates talent development and helps to bring out the best in the employees. The other way to look at coaching is a job on training with the line manager who had experience in a particular field and this specifically develops the required tacit knowledge which is required for execution. Another way of defining coaching is to look at it as a structured process to develop and harness a person's talent with a view of achieving set objectives. During this process, there is acquisition of both tacit and explicit knowledge. The other part which is critical is the ability of the line managers to motivate the employees for them to pursue their careers and develop their ability.¹⁰⁰

2.5.3 Passion and competence

There are some other schools of thought which believe that talent is more than performance as the organisation can have performers, but still fails to achieve set business goals. For an organisation to be considered world class, it requires true talent and not just performers. From this perspective, the definition of talent also changes to an individual with passion and competence to meet a business need and deliver results. It implies that there is more to competence and passion of an individual than is believed to be. As Allan and Nancy put it, a world class organisation should aim at hiring an enthusiastic individual and teach the content and if it makes a mistake of engaging the content without the enthusiasm, you will never acquire talent. If the person has the know-how only, he or she should not be engaged unless if he or she possess the passion to do the job.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Vaiman V, Vance CM, 2008. Smart talent management: building knowledge assets for competitive advantage

¹⁰⁰ Kermally S, 2004. Developing & Managing Talent.

¹⁰¹ Weiss A, MacKay N, 2009. The Talent Advantage: How to attract and retain the best and the brightest.

It is believed that talent is found in someone with passion and competence to meet the business need and deliver results to meet or exceed the need. When the pool of talent is created, the organisation will have a competitive advantage as there is a shortage of real talent world over.¹⁰²

From the above definition of talent, it can be seen that talent can be viewed from a group perspective and from an individual perspective. In some cases, talent may be referred to the as an entire workforce population of an organisation. In groups, talent can refer to a pool of employees who are exceptional in their skills and abilities either in a specific technical area (such as software, graphics skills) or a competency (such a consumer marketing talent), or a more general area (such as general managers or high-potential talent). It is imperative to understand that when we are talking about talent, we should be mindful of the circumstance in which we should use the term.¹⁰³ The close description of talent is that it can be considered as a complex amalgam of employees' skills, knowledge, cognitive ability and potential. Employees' values and work preferences are also of major importance.¹⁰⁴

The description of talent as defined above is more inclusive than exclusive and from the exclusive approach talent is viewed as a subset of an organisation's population which is normally 10% of the population. The 10% of the population is the one which is believed to possess the required characteristics, motivation, skill; abilities and experience to enable them to perform above their peers. In organisations, these are people who are given attention to accelerate their career growth with opportunities for them to flourish in an organisation. Then the rest are moderately given some attention in terms of the required trainings.¹⁰⁵

2.5.4 Talent as recognition in organisations

Understanding what talent is is a spark management reaction to the managing of talent. If the organisation believes that talent is an acquired ability, it will come up with initiatives to drive the talent agenda in an organisation. Excellent organisations always believe in talent to be an acquired ability and create talent by developing the people strategy that is aligned with the business strategy. This is done through the changing and fine tuning of the organisational culture or values, identifying the roles that have an impact on the business, leadership

¹⁰² Weiss A, MacKay N, 2009. The Talent Advantage: How to attract and retain the best and the brightest.

¹⁰³ Howe M, Davidson J, Sloboda J, 1998. Innate talents.Reality or myth?

¹⁰⁴ Tansley C, 2011. What do we mean by the term “talent” in talent management?

¹⁰⁵ Gallardo-Gallardo E, 2013. What is the meaning of Talent in the world of work

development and succession planning, people management as well as reward and compensation management. If people strategy is well aligned to the organisation agenda, the talents will be developed and the business goals will be achieved.¹⁰⁶

Talent is the blood of any organisation—without it, an organisation is no more than a useless plan waiting to be executed. People have finally re-emerged as the most valuable resource in the business world today. Further, Gerino pointed out that financial capital has become less important, and human capital has become the discriminator in the 21st Century. The main contributors to organisations are people and it is talent that differentiates one organisation from the other.¹⁰⁷

“If you don’t know where you’re going, there’s a good chance you’ll end up someplace else and certainly with the wrong people”¹⁰⁸

Another way of defining talent is that a talented person is anyone who adds value to an enterprise or activity, or to put it another way, to be considered ‘talented’ you have to add value to something; improving it in some way. This definition of talent has several fundamental implications for leaders and their organisations. First, innovation, relationships and development are inextricably linked with talent. This means moving away from traditional approaches to managing people with a hierarchical focus on executive potential to an approach that favours those who can innovate, sell products or ideas, learn how to improve and do more and even change the way that the organisation operates. Success is rarely an individual pursuit. Talent and value result from collaboration; this might be through team effort or through peer competition. We just need to get better at creating environments that encourage it. This benefits every individual and their employer in a symbiotic relationship with the success of one relying on the success of the other.

More than ever, talent operates systemically and talented people are attracted through relationships, developed through relationships and retained through relationships. The opposite also holds true.

¹⁰⁶ Weiss A, MacKay N, 2009. The Talent Advantage. How to attract and retain the best and the brightest.

¹⁰⁷ Guarino AC, 2007. Smart is not Enough. The South Pole Strategy and Other powerful Talent Management Initiative.

¹⁰⁸ Simonton DK, 1999. Origins of genius. Darwinian perspective on creativity.

2.5.5 Talent ecology of organisations

Crucially, it is the talent ecology of an organisation that determines success. This means how the organisation functions, why it exists, what it values and how it changes. We need to concentrate on the organisational context for talent, looking more closely at the forest of tall trees as an example to draw lessons from. When it comes to the debate on talent, the emphasis is on organisations critically looking at the structure and components of the talent ecology. Everyone in an organisation has a role to play and as such, they should be given an equal opportunity of learning and career progression than focusing on a selected few individuals.¹⁰⁹

A talented person is anyone who adds value to an enterprise or activity, a concept that is simultaneously simple, vital and often challenging. We also describe how best to find and nurture talent, the need to get the right structure, the importance of networks and the nature of talented teams.¹¹⁰

The interpretation of what talent is, is very critical in decision making. If the line of thought that talent is acquired is followed, it will be realised that talent is in abundance. As Davies and Kourdi state, talent is in abundance and it is about people and leadership and nothing else. They further stated that most of the research and surveys that are done on talent management in a number of organisations are almost the same; such as there are not enough quality people, the organisation needs to do more, HR is not proficient and that leaders are not giving the exercise of talent management enough attention and so on.¹¹¹

In the same vein, talent has not been managed well as a result of these misunderstandings. Most of the organisations and HR practitioners have confessed to have invested a lot of resources and time in managing the talent for the organisation, but unfortunately, they fail to follow through. As a result, there are a lot of expectations which are created within the talent pools without fulfilling them; for example, promotions, retentions and high pay. On the other hand, the individuals outside the talent pools feel disengaged. Davies and Kourdi further mentioned

¹⁰⁹ Evans RJ, Bickel R, Pendarvis ED, 2000. Musical Talent: Innate or Acquired?

¹¹⁰ Davies J, Kourdi J, 2010. The truth about talent: a guide to building a dynamic workforce, realising potential and helping leaders succeed

¹¹¹ Davies J, Kourdi J, 2010. The truth about talent. A guide to building a dynamic workforce, realising potential and helping leaders succeed

that there is a growing unease that conventional approaches to talent management actually destroy the value in an organisation.¹¹²

“Conventional approaches to talent management are like Soviet communism: an interesting well - intentioned idea in theory but a disaster in practice, rooted in the previous century, now with a vast range of vested interests and a concept that has definitely outstayed its welcome.”¹¹³

When it comes to organisations, it is commercially dangerous to invest in small groups of talent pools as the approach is somewhat static and it takes a lot of time to realise the benefits. It is important to note that talent operates systemically and talented people are attracted through relationships, developed through relationships and retained through relationships. The enrichment of talent is dependent on the talent ecology of the organisation, that is, how the organisation, functions, why it exists, what it values and how it changes.

Most organisations are terrible at applying the principles of great performance. Many companies seem arranged almost perfectly to prevent people from taking advantage of these principles for themselves or for the teams in which they work. That situation presents a great opportunity for companies that understand the principles and apply them widely.¹¹⁴

We have seen that great performance is built through activities that are designed specifically to improve particular skills, and that in many realms teachers and coaches are especially helpful in designing those activities. In most organisations, nobody is in the role of teacher or coach. Employees are not told which skills will be most helpful to them and certainly aren't told how best to develop them. But most top performing organisations have explicit coaching and mentoring programmes. At these enterprises, careful job assignments and other large-scale programmes determine the general direction of an employee's development; mentors provide detailed advice on which sub skills need attention urgently.¹¹⁵

Although executives at the best companies talk about their leadership development programmes, they generally realise the term is not quite right. Developing leaders is not a programme it is a way of living. In this day and era where the customers or consumers of

¹¹² Davies J, Kourdi J, 2010. The truth about talent: a guide to building a dynamic workforce, realising potential and helping leaders succeed

¹¹³ Davies J, Kourdi J, 2010. The truth about talent: a guide to building a dynamic workforce, realising potential and helping leaders succeed

¹¹⁴ Colvin G, 2008. Talent is overrated. What really separates world class performers from everyone else

¹¹⁵ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us: Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

products understand a lot more about the products before they make the decision to buy, it calls for serious innovation and understanding of the customer's requirement so that products can be designed to meet current and future customer needs. This can only be achieved if the organisations invest in people and pushing the employees beyond their comfort zone otherwise an organisation risks losing competitive advantage.¹¹⁶

It is very important to understand the problem of defining what talent is, is not the scarcity of the people, potential or talent, but it is the scarcity of the people with the right knowledge and skills to move the organisation forward. Therefore, talent is the ability to generate value and when an individual generates value at the time in question there is likelihood that everyone around him or her will predict the potential. One of the points to note is that talent does not flourish in isolation, but in the right environment. Davies and Jeremy have coined this as Talent Ecology and have defined it as the situation, culture and surroundings which an organisation creates for the talent to thrive.¹¹⁷

Businesses in the 21st Century need to create value for a customer which essentially means that the people in that particular organisation need to create value for themselves as well. Based on this understanding, it means that as long as an individual can create value he or she is talented. What is particularly important to note is that the environment needs to be conducive for the value to be created by everyone in an organisation.¹¹⁸

Further research shows that the return of investment is low on talent management because of the way talent has been understood by most organisations and HR practitioners. There is a perception that only a few individuals are talented in an organisation without looking at the wider organisation with potential. The research by Davies and Kourdi indicates that it is no longer workable to consider only a few in managing talents. Davies & Kourdi argue that:

The way that senior executives in organisations think about talent is increasingly outdated. It focuses on selection of a few brilliant individuals who will lead the organisation in future - they receive all the opportunities and resources and, unsurprisingly make it to the top. What about the potential in everyone else? What

¹¹⁶ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

¹¹⁷ Davies J, Kourdi J, 2010. The truth about talent: a guide to building a dynamic workforce, realising potential and helping leaders succeed

¹¹⁸ Davies J, Kourdi J, 2010. The truth about talent: a guide to building a dynamic workforce, realising potential and helping leaders succeed

*about the unpredictability of the future? This view will not grow or sustain organisation in the future.*¹¹⁹

It is very important and paramount to understand that talent is a very dynamic concept which is driven by the needs of the organisation. It all depends on what the organisational strategy in achieving the set objectives or goals is. The organisation context which will mainly be driven by the economic ecosystem and circumstance at the time will dictate which skills and qualities will be needed to run a business. This leads to another definition of talent by organisations which is, that a talented individual should be able to create value in an organisation or any faculty. If we understand talent from this perspective, the organisational talent will be built on the principle or premise of the skill and capabilities which individuals bring to the organisation. Everyone has got talent, but organisations through proper line manager's capability and equipped leadership can make everyone realise their potential and realise their dream and align themselves to the organisational strategy.¹²⁰

2.5.6 Top performers in organisations

As an individual is acquiring or adding knowledge to his or her domain, the objective is to amass information, thereby building a mental model; a picture of how the domain functions as a system. This is one of the defining traits of great performers; they all possess large, highly developed, intricate mental models of their domains.¹²¹

We have seen how top performers can reach into their long-term memory in ways that ordinary performers cannot, and how it is not because they have exceptional memories but because they have exceptional knowledge of their domain. The organisation of that voluminous knowledge in a mental model is what gives it so much power. A mental model not only enables remarkable recall, it also helps top performers learn and understand new information better than average performers, since they see it not as an isolated bit of data, but as part of a large and comprehensible picture.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Davies J, Kourdi J, 2010. The truth about talent: a guide to building a dynamic workforce, realising potential and helping leaders succeed

¹²⁰ Davies J, Kourdi J, 2010. The truth about talent: a guide to building a dynamic workforce, realising potential and helping leaders succeed

¹²¹ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

¹²² Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

Since the mental model is an understanding of how the domain functions as a system, you know how changes in the system's inputs will affect the outputs that is, how the events that just happened will create the events that are about to happen. A mental model forms the framework on which you hang your growing knowledge of your domain. This will create a frame of reference which is going to be helping an individual to distinguish the relevant information from the irrelevant information.¹²³

A mental model is never finished. Great performers not only possess highly developed mental models, they are also always expanding and revising those models. It is not possible to do the whole job through study alone. In many fields, much of this work must be done through deliberate practice activities or through metacognitive processes in the work itself, as has been discussed. In addition, significant building and enriching of mental models can be done through study and other knowledge seeking, and it would be foolish to leave these tools unused.¹²⁴

As a result of the historical bias of believing that talent or high performance is in born or natural, most organisations do not apply the principle of knowledge accumulation and high performance. However, understanding this principle is becoming an imperative for all organisations that want to survive in today's economy. In the knowledge economy, the financial capital is based on the human capital and how the abilities of the people in an organisation — much more than traditionally important factors like economies of scale or patent protections — determine an enterprise's success or failure. And as seen from the forgoing discussion, in a global economy, standards of performance are rising more quickly and more broadly than ever before, leaving below average performers no place to hide. Those are reasons enough for organisations to start applying the principles of great performance in a big way for them to realise the benefit of knowledge.¹²⁵

Organisations are finding that the advantages of building a big reputation for developing people are even greater than they may have thought. Such a reputation grants these companies "a first-pick advantage," as the RBL Group consulting firm calls it, an edge in attracting the cream of college and business-school students. By continually attracting the most promising graduates,

¹²³ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us. Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

¹²⁴ Shenk D, 2010. The Genius in All of us: Why everything you have been told about Genetics, Talent and IQ is wrong

¹²⁵ Davies J, Kourdi J, 2010. The truth about talent: a guide to building a dynamic workforce, realising potential and helping leaders succeed.

and then developing them further, these companies become even higher-performing organisations, further enhancing their ability to attract the best — a virtuous cycle that makes a company more dominant every year.

2.6 Talent management

In order to have a full appreciation of talent with regard to organisations, it is imperative that talent management is also understood in detail. In an era of expanding globalisation and increasing competition, organisations worldwide have recognised that the knowledge, skills and abilities of their employees represent a major source of competitive advantage. Hence, talent management has emerged as a key strategic issue in organisations. With this focus, there has been a substantial analysis on the association between talent management and enhanced performance.¹²⁶

Talent management has been investigated within the remit of several HR specialism, including succession planning, human resource development, and organisational learning. Regardless of the term used, the theme across this work highlights the value of talent as an unequivocal source of competitive advantage.¹²⁷

Talent management approaches are different depending on what the organisations understands talent to be and what the organisation intends to achieve. One of the approaches is the exclusive approach which focuses on the top performers or ‘A’ players of an organisation. This method of talent management is also referred to as differentiated approach which is a combined systematic identification of key positions and development of high potential, high-performing employees for such positions through the use of a differentiated Human Resource Management design. The reason for this approach is mainly for talent retention as it assumed that the top performers possess more knowledge and contribute to the achievement of the organisation’s strategic goals than the rest of the employees. Therefore, this approach aims at creating opportunities for the top performers by motivating them thereby retaining them.

Whichever talent management approach the organisation chooses, management of talent is a competitive resource, leadership are the organisation owners of talent agenda and there should be high investment. The senior leadership are expected to be extremely involved in championing talent management. As leaders influence all aspects of the organisation, the extent

¹²⁶Collings DG, Mellahi K, 2009. Strategic Talent Management

¹²⁷ Shehan M, 2012. Developing managerial talent Exploring the link between management talent and perceived performance in multinational corporations (MNCs).

to which an organisation and its leadership signal support for talent is directly relevant to talented employees. Much as it is imperative for the organisation's leadership to be actively involved and committed to the talent management programmes, line managers and supervisors are very key in talent identification as well as day to day management. Once the identification and selection is done, the decision will rest with management on whether to disclose or not to disclose. Talent identification is a significant event which results in employee inclusion in a firm's talent pool, to which heightened development investment, performance rewards and management attention is extended. All this will work if the organisation is also interested in getting the feedback on how this programme works.¹²⁸

2.6.1 Talent management definitions

For us to fully appreciate the meaning of talent management, it will be imperative to extensively provide various meanings as well as schools of thought of talent management. As noticed with the definition of talent, there are various lines of thought and these results in various definitions of how to manage talent. In this day and age, knowledge assets need to be looked after by managing it well for the organisation to remain competitive otherwise the organisation risks going into oblivion. Through talent management, the organisation will be able to create, refresh, and distribute knowledge for competitive advantage. For this reason, other meanings of talent management will be provided.

One of the definitions of talent management is that it is the process of developing the business strategy, identifying talent gaps, recruiting, developing and retaining talented employees through a variety of initiatives.¹²⁹ Talent management has been a challenge for most Managing Directors and the solution to the challenge is Talent Mobility which can help retain critical talent, improve employee engagement and increase business growth. By its definition Talent Mobility is an organisation's ability to move talent across geographical locations as well as movement of employees within or across organisations, industries, countries, occupations or skill sets.¹³⁰ Smart Talent Management is a recent terminology which is defined as the combined use of the distinctly different concepts of knowledge management and talent

¹²⁸ King AK, 2015. The talent deal and journey. Understanding how employees respond to talent identification over time.

¹²⁹ Whelan E, Carcary M, 2011. Integrating talent and knowledge management. Where are the benefits?

¹³⁰ Blass E, 2009. Talent Management: Cases and Commentary.

management to resolve human performance problems and to achieve organisational objectives.¹³¹

Talent management is the work of designing and implementing the strategies, systems, and processes needed for *talent sustainability* — an organisation’s ability to continuously attract, develop, and retain people with the capabilities and commitment needed for current and future organisational success.¹³²

Talent management is organisation specific and understanding it and defining it has got a lot of repercussions as it results in different types of initiatives. For example, if we look at the following two definitions of talent management, it may help to put the point into perspective.

“An organisations’ journey is to identify and change the human patterns of behaviours and attitudes that are involved with sustaining competitive success and the systematic intent to place every individual in the company in a position where their skills are being extensively and optimally utilised at any given time.”¹³³ The difference does not seem much but the two definitions look at very different thought processes. The former looks largely at changing the mindset and ability for the organisation to be competitive while the latter looks at identifying the talent and place the talent where they can contribute effectively. Depending on the definition of talent management, an organisation will implement initiatives or practices that will realise the intended objective.

For talent management to add value to the organisation effectiveness and performance, it should be viewed in the lens of knowledge management where knowledge is a valued resource. If talent management is looked at as just an HR thing or initiative, no meaningful contribution will be achieved. As Vance and Vaiman put it, talent management can take managers even beyond the terms such as human resource and human capital in valuing, utilising and benefiting from employees as the term talent in itself suggests a sense of value and rarity.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Collings D, 2010 . Smart Talent Management. Building Knowledge Assets for Competitive Advantage.

¹³² Smith R., Campbell M, 2011. Talent Conversations-What They Are, Why They’re Crucial, And How to Do them Right

¹³³ Collings D, 2010. Smart Talent Management. Building Knowledge Assets for Competitive Advantage.

¹³⁴ Vance CM, Vaiman V, 2008. Smart talent management: building knowledge assets for competitive advantage

2.6.2 Talent management traits

Talent Management is involved at all levels and it is much more of a culture than an HR initiative. Below are the 7 traits of the talent management that was coined in the Reliable Magazine as appeared in Vance and Vaiman in the smart talent management.

Corporate Identity

- Who are you as an organisation? Do you have the desired culture?
- Do all of your employees understand your vision, mission and core values or beliefs?
- What keeps your employees coming to work each day?
- What drives their behaviour in the workplace with your customers and with one another?

Recruitment and Selection

- How do you identify and select the ‘right’ people for your organisation?
- Is it based on gut feel? Is it based on their education and skill level?

Performance Management and Coaching

- Are you properly managing performance and providing the kind of coaching employees need to improve?

Employee Development and Training

- Are you developing your employees?
- Are you helping them identify a plan to improve their skill set and maximise their potential?

Compensation, Rewards and Benefits

- Are you properly rewarding your employees?
- Are you helping them identify a plan to improve their skill set and maximise their potential?

Success Planning and Leadership Development

- Do you have a plan in the event that ‘Joe gets hit by a bus? ‘How are you creating tomorrow’s leaders?

Compliance, Policy and Procedures

- Do you have your ducks in a row? Are you meeting your legal obligations?
- How are you handling employee relations?¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Vance CM, Vaiman V, 2008. Smart talent management. building knowledge assets for competitive advantage

The above seven characteristics of talent management show that everyone should be involved and talent management can become a way of life. Once it becomes the way of life, knowledge will thrive and contribute to the sustainability of the organisation.

Both talent management and knowledge management have strengths and weakness but fusion of the two concepts covers up most of the weakness. Employees use the human knowledge to operate or do any kind of work including strategic planning and competing with the competitors in the market.¹³⁶

Knowledge management's focus is on the technological tools and equipment in handling but with very little focus on the tacit knowledge which the employees possess. A lot of energy in knowledge management has been put on the hardware and soft application without giving attention to the human knowledge affecting the entry and application of the experienced bases knowledge. Even when knowledge management focuses on the human aspect, it will be too abstract and without intensity.¹³⁷

Talent management provides the fertile environment for knowledge management to flourish effectively. The innovations of the HR systems in the 21st Century are advanced to the extent of developing staffing systems that provide the necessary talent for effective knowledge management. Knowledge management's effectiveness is attained by attracting candidates who possess the much-needed knowledge through the use of talent staffing systems.¹³⁸

2.6.3 Talent management initiatives

There are a number of talent initiatives which act as drivers of knowledge and support knowledge management. These initiatives are the ones that connect knowledge management and talent management. A number of talent initiatives provide the ground for organisational learning which makes the individuals and teams in the organisation to be in a continuous learning. The only way to win in the competitive environment is to continue to learn and learn at a faster rate than the competitor. Learning is the acquisition and application of new knowledge, skills and experiences that changes behaviour, thought and belief that result in

¹³⁶ Vance CM, Vaiman V, 2008. Smart talent management. building knowledge assets for competitive advantage

¹³⁷ Vance CM, Vaiman V, 2008. Smart talent management. building knowledge assets for competitive advantage

¹³⁸ Vance CM, Vaiman V, 2008. Smart talent management: building knowledge assets for competitive advantage

improved performance and better adaptation to take advantage of the competition in the operating market.¹³⁹

We have been talking about talent management without mentioning what forms talent management. It is these compositions of talent management that make it to be appreciated in an organisation. The following are the talent management initiatives which I believe support the flourishing of knowledge and knowledge management process. Without following any order, the first initiative is mentoring.

2.6.1 Mentorship programme

Mentoring always happens between two people, with one having knowledge and most experience and being able to share or transfer into the new. Mentoring is very critical in transferring knowledge in an organisation both tacit and explicit resulting in effective performance for well aligned employees in the business. An organisation with a mentorship programme for the top performers and critical employees in selected positions makes the employees feel appreciated as its show sense of direction. In addition, it creates a sense of belonging and loyalty to the mentees and consequently leads to retaining the required knowledge for organisation performance.¹⁴⁰ Apart from the mentorship programme, the other deliberate talent management initiative that makes a knowledgeable employee is using employees within the organisation as trainers for knowledge transfer.

2.6.2 Training and using employees as trainers

For any talent Management programme, learning and development is one of the areas that should be incorporated in the talent management programme. Based on the performance gaps identified among employees by the line managers and the Human Resources function, the employees will be taken for training with an expectation of improving on their performance. The other route of request comes through employees themselves by submitting their learning road maps or training needs based on their career aspirations. The effective ways of delivering the training is to choose experienced employees within an organisation to teach other employees. Through this initiative, the knowledge will be transferred and retained with an organisation. Additionally, selecting employees to serve as trainers may be seen by them as a reward and recognition of their contributions to the organisation. They may feel that their

¹³⁹ Vance CM, Vaiman V, 2008. Smart talent management: building knowledge assets for competitive advantage

¹⁴⁰ Lengnick-Hall M, Andrade LS, 2008. Talent staffing systems for effective knowledge management

knowledge and expertise is valued by the organisation. Consequently, using employees as trainers may not only be an effective means for knowledge transfer; it may also be an effective means for retaining critical knowledgeable workers.¹⁴¹ Another way of transferring knowledge in an organisation is through the use of job rotations and engaging the experts to share their experiences.

2.6.3 Job rotations and expatriates

Under this initiative, employees are swapped in their roles or jobs so as to exposure them to some other roles and functions so that they acquire some knowledge and be able to apply that knowledge. Job rotations is used to help the organisation keep the staff engaged as some staff get bored to be in one job for a long period. The other reason for job swap is to manage risk within an organisation as overstaying in the job, make some individuals become complacent or even end up committing fraud or operational lapses. Through Job rotation, the employees in an organisation will be engaged and acquiring the new knowledge in readiness for the future roles that the organisation may create.¹⁴²

Similar to job rotation is expatriates or international job assignments. With expatriates, what happens is that the organisation that has got international presence in various markets will send its employees to another country to transfer knowledge to the local staff and learn some good practices from the country of origin. It is also important to note that the employees who are sent for international assignments are individuals with the technical knowhow of the role. The technical know aspect has been enforced in most countries through the use of regulations where an expatriate will be exposed to checks to ensure that he or she is being brought in that particular country and has got the expertise required for the role to be able to share with the locals.¹⁴³

2.6.4 Succession planning

Succession planning is the initiative in talent management, which is used to maintain the knowledge levels and keep employees within the organisation. There are different approaches to succession planning and the first one is to groom successors for strategic, managerial roles in an event of the incumbent leaving the role for any reason either through resignation,

¹⁴¹ Lengnick-Hall M, Andrade LS, 2008. Talent staffing systems for effective knowledge management

¹⁴² Vance CM, Vaiman V, 2008. Smart talent management. building knowledge assets for competitive advantage

¹⁴³ Vance CM, Vaiman V, 2008. Smart talent management: building knowledge assets for competitive advantage

deployment to another unit or organisation. The other approach to succession planning is done based on the critical and strategic roles which the organisation has such that in the case that someone leaves there will be continuity in an organisation. Through the succession planning, process line managers will be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals on the succession plans and come up with the actions to close the knowledge gap. In so doing, the individual will become competent to contribute to the effectiveness of the organisation hence meeting the talent management agenda.¹⁴⁴

2.6.5 Career planning and career management

With the advancement of technology and change in the 21st Century organisation career planning, management has tremendously changed and this has resulted in contributing effectively to the knowledge management of the organisations. Much as the benefit is purely seen from the talent management and HR, it also plays a vital role in creating, acquiring, retaining and managing of knowledge in an organisation.

Career planning has always been structured and its structured form has always been contributing to the talent and knowledge management. However, the contribution and the relationship between talent and knowledge management has further been enhanced with the coining of the “new career”, which is a concept organisations use by exposing their employees to a none structured, but well defined and predictable career trajectory. The emphasis has been on the more flexible structures. This also has implication in talent management as it retains employees who want to own their talent and improve it. In a way, this will contribute to retaining and recreating the knowledge of an organisation.¹⁴⁵

In addition to the career planning, there is also a concept in talent management, which is called Career Self Management and Mobility which mainly focuses and looks at the involvement of the individual to own their own career development. The structure of this talent management is mainly linear with little hierarchical career development. The definition for career self management refers to proactive behaviours that employees show with respect to managing their own careers which involves the activities of collecting information about the existing individuals career opportunities, searching for feedback about one’s performance and competencies and creating career opportunities through networking and actions aimed at

¹⁴⁴ Vance CM, Vaiman V, 2008. Smart talent management: building knowledge assets for competitive advantage.

¹⁴⁵ DeVos A, Soens N, 2008. The power of career counselling for enhanced talent and knowledge management.

enhancing one's visibility.¹⁴⁶ By owning their careers, individuals will have a lot of focus on developing themselves fairly so that once part of their objectives are not achieved, they will be forced to create knowledge.¹⁴⁷

The shift of emphasis towards talent management for staff retention may be seen as three separate views. First, there is the view that it is necessary for an organisation to learn and use the consequent knowledge as a source of competitive advantage.¹⁴⁸ It is argued that certain human resource management practices can support learning development, including the selective hiring and strategic training of key personnel.¹⁴⁹ Thus, talent management can be seen as a specific way of attracting and retaining the key knowledge and capabilities of the future.

The second story is one of the global skills shortages for organisations which is keenly felt in a number of countries. The skills shortage has led to increased competition for the talent that exists, forcing organisations to take active steps towards staff retention. Lastly, there is the story of the growth in 'Generation Y' tendencies. Young employees are less concerned about spending their all entire life with a single employer, they instead prefer to maintain a work-life that is the envy of their mature colleagues; consequently, the current global skills shortage story is exacerbated by a change in employees' attitudes and values.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Vance CM, Vaiman V, 2008. Smart talent management: building knowledge assets for competitive advantage.

¹⁴⁷ Vance CM, Vaiman V, 2008. Smart talent management: building knowledge assets for competitive advantage.

¹⁴⁸ Hass M, 2006. Knowledge Gathering, Team capabilities, and Project Performance in Challenging Work Environments.

¹⁴⁹ Lopez SP, Peon JMM, Ordas CJV, 2005. Human Resource Practices, Organizational Learning and Business Performance

¹⁵⁰ Aiman-Smith L, Bergey P, Cantwell AR, Doran M, 2006. The Coming Knowledge and Capability Shortage.

Chapter 3

An overview of talent in the context of knowledge management theory

3.1 Introduction

To have a full appreciation of talent in the context of knowledge management theory, it is imperative to briefly review what knowledge and knowledge management are, and how they relate to talent management in practice. To start with, it will be critical to understand the definitions and schools of thought with regard to knowledge. Further, clear understanding and adoption of the definition to be considered is paramount.

3.2 Definition of knowledge

Knowledge is defined as an epistemic goal in the generation of particular proposition belief.¹⁵¹ This also implies that knowledge is essentially a true belief than anything else.

Knowledge as defined by Davenport and Prusak as:

A fluid mix of framed experiences, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. In organisations, it often becomes embedded not only in documents and repositories, but also in organisational routines, processes, practices, and norms.¹⁵²

How does knowledge differ from data and information? The three terms are often used interchangeably in casual conversation, and this can lead to sloppy thinking on the subject of

¹⁵¹ Sartwell C, 1992. Why is Knowledge Merely True Belief?

¹⁵² Davenport T, Prusak L, 1998. Working Knowledge. How Organisations Manage What they Know.

knowledge. One approach is to think of data as being located in the world, and knowledge as being located in agents, with information taking on a mediating role between them. Data can be viewed as a discernible difference between different energy states only some of which have information value for agents. Bateson (1972) defined this information as “the difference that makes a difference” to someone. Where data is thus informative, it will modify an agent’s expectations and dispositions to act in particular ways—that is, what we call its knowledge base.¹⁵³ Note that for the purpose of this study, an agent does not have to be a human being. It could be an animal, a machine, or an organisation made up of other agents. All that is required for it to be “knowledgeable” is that its internal dispositions to act can be modified upon.

It can be drawn from the distinctions between data, information, and knowledge that first, if we accept these distinctions, then we must recognise that, in reality, it is never knowledge as such that flows between agents, but data. Some measure of resonance can be achieved between the knowledge states of two agents that are sharing the same data - we call this “getting on the same wavelength.” However, because of differences in their prior experiences as well as differences in the way that they will process the data, two agents can never achieve identical dispositions to act and hence identical knowledge states.

Knowledge is increasingly becoming the most intangible asset of every business. Knowledge is created, transferred and used by individuals. Technology is merely a facilitator of knowledge creation and transfer. There are basically two types of knowledge; these are tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge. Tacit knowledge resides in an individual’s head. It is personal knowledge and it has a technical as well as cognitive dimension. Explicit knowledge is the knowledge that is codified and embedded and recorded. Development of talent is about the creation of tacit knowledge. Talented individuals are today’s knowledge workers. These workers have experience and training, and they are constantly in need of enhancing their tacit knowledge. Such enhancement comes from coaching, workshops, speaking and sharing experiences with others, and most importantly learning.¹⁵⁴

Knowledge has become very important in gaining and sustaining competitive advantage. It is now recognised as a key capability if an organisation is to compete effectively in a global market place and within the context of business uncertainty. Managing knowledge enables

¹⁵³ Bateson G, 1972. Steps to an ecology of mind: collected essays in anthropology, psychiatry, evolution, and epistemology.

¹⁵⁴ Racz I, Bencsik A, Bogнар T, Stifter V, 2014. Management of knowledge by intellectual worker.

organisations to anticipate and meet customers' needs, enhance employees' competencies, generate innovations, minimise business risks, reduce costs by not re-inventing wheels and in general bring about business transformation. Knowledge in an organisation comes in two formats: one is located in employees' heads and is known as tacit knowledge and the other is embedded in processes or codified in written forms (manuals, flow charts etc.) A significant proportion of knowledge in organisations is in a tacit form which means that it is the employees who control knowledge.¹⁵⁵

The big challenge facing any organisation is to manage these employees to use their knowledge for the benefit of their organisations. Organisations themselves have to put processes in place to encourage these employees to not only use but to create and transfer, and in some cases codify their knowledge to make their organisations knowledge-driven. Tacit knowledge of an individual can be transferred to tacit knowledge of a team or a group by conversations, dialogue and coaching, mentoring and face-to-face meetings. The creation and transfer of knowledge do not happen by employing clever and talented people. These clever and talented people have to be encouraged to acquire the new talent of transferring knowledge. These individuals have to be trained in coaching their colleagues and to act as mentors, and they need to acquire the skills of communicating interpersonally. It is imperative for businesses to provide training in the 'personal development' area in order to enable individuals to transfer knowledge.¹⁵⁶

3.3 Knowledge sharing

Once the knowledge is transferred from one individual to another individual or a team, it is still in a form of tacit knowledge. To make such knowledge explicit, processes have to be put in place to bring about desired transformation. Technology in this case can be an effective enabler. Documentation, intranet and so on, can be used very effectively to transform tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. Again, incentives and encouragement have to be given to individuals to participate in such transformation processes. Encouragement would involve training in using technology. Managing knowledge effectively involves the creation of a thriving environment within the organisation that would facilitate knowledge use, creation and transfer. It is all about developing talent at individual and organisational level. Once knowledge is codified, existing and new employees use manuals and other documents to make use of the knowledge and by

¹⁵⁵ Racz I, Bencsik A, Bogнар T, Stifter V, 2014. Management of knowledge by intellectual worker.

¹⁵⁶ Daveport T, Prusak L, 1998. Working Knowledge. How Organisations Manage What they Know.

doing so they ‘internalise’ procedures and practices, and in time develop their own tacit knowledge.¹⁵⁷

In a knowledge-driven organisation, employees culturally have to accept that it is very important from the business point of view to share and create knowledge. There are some organisations that do not believe in developing talent since they believe that talented staff will only stay for three to five years, so why waste money on talent development. Organisations with this type of attitude may be successful on a ‘hit and run’ basis but very soon they will lose talented staff and will find it very difficult to survive. When staff walks away from an organisation, that organisation loses a massive amount of tacit knowledge and thus the human capital of the organisation. ¹⁵⁸

Innovation plays a very important role in driving the business strategy of every organisation. An organisation does not enjoy sustainable competitive advantage merely by possessing resources and talent. Organisations need to be innovative and ahead of their competitors in order to survive in a competitive environment. Some of the innovations are a result of new knowledge creation and others are a result of recycled knowledge. Whichever way one looks at it, innovation involves new ways of thinking.

Innovation involves taking risks and inevitably, in some cases, brings about failures. Failures should be used as stepping stones towards success. The culture of an organisation has to ‘allow’ for some degree of failure and put in process ways of learning from failures. This is not an easy thing to do, as for many organisations it is difficult to admit any failure.

It is also important to understand that innovation relates not only to products but also to processes and people. Knowledge plus imagination, in an appropriate context, result in innovation.

“Tactics are important but they do not win football matches. Players win football matches. The best team stands out because they are a team, because the individual players have been truly integrated so that the team functions with a single spirit. ”

Sir Alex Ferguson

¹⁵⁷ Davies J, Kourdi J, 2010. The truth about talent. A guide to building a dynamic workforce, realising potential and helping leaders succeed

¹⁵⁸ Kermally S, 2004. Developing & Managing Talent. How to much talent to the role and convert it to a strength.

It has been observed that people contribute and create value in today's economy as the landscape has drastically changed. For one to be exceptional in their duties, knowledge, innovations and relationships rather than executive potential tomorrow are important. It's all about relationships that are created and knowledge that is acquired within teams that makes organisations and any sports team to perform competitively. ¹⁵⁹

Knowledge is the foundation of great performance, and in fields where important advances are being made continually, mastering the accumulated knowledge takes longer all the time. That is easy to see in physics. When you think of all the twentieth-century giants in this field—Planck, Bohr, Heisenberg, Fermi, Feynman, and many others—it is clear why today's aspiring physicists need many more years of preparatory study than even Einstein did.

Thus, “knowledge sharing” refers to some degree of resonance being achieved between the knowledge states of two or more agents following some sharing of data among them. ¹⁶⁰

Second, we must accept that if knowledge is dispositional and hence rooted in agency, then it is not a single “thing” with easily traced contours. As the cognitive neurosciences have now established, it is more like a set of complex activation patterns that can vary greatly from agent to agent, or from moment to moment within a single agent. Thus, how easily knowledge can be “shared,” in the sense that the activation patterns of different agents can be made to resonate, will vary from case to case as a function of its complexity. If two people see the same cat, for example, there will be some overlap in the patterns of neurons that are activated in their respective brains. But significant differences will also occur, for example, if one had some bad prior experiences with cats that the other did not have. Variations in activation patterns have many sources which cannot be discussed here. However, one important source is the fact that some types of knowledge can be more easily articulated than other types; the data that transmits it can thus flow more readily. ¹⁶¹

People are concerned with saving time and resources required to articulate and transmit knowledge. They are thus more likely to share knowledge that is clear and unambiguous than knowledge of a more tacit and elusive nature¹⁶². It will be easier to transmit a list of stock

¹⁵⁹ Davies J, Kourdi J, 2010. The truth about talent: a guide to building a dynamic workforce, realising potential and helping leaders succeed.

¹⁶⁰ Nonaka I, Takeuchi H, 1995. The Knowledge-Creating Company

¹⁶² Nonaka I, Takeuchi H, 1995. The Knowledge-Creating Company

market figures by fax, for example, than to faithfully describe a Jackson Pollock painting in detail over the telephone. We can better understand this by looking at the data processing requirements associated with the articulation and transmission of knowledge. The articulation of knowledge, in effect, calls for two kinds of cognitive efforts: abstraction and codification. Abstraction either invokes or creates the minimum number of cognitive categories through which an agent makes sense of events. The fewer the categories an agent needs, the more abstract becomes its apprehension of events. Conversely, the larger the numbers of categories it requires, the more concrete its apprehension of events. Thus, for example, a problem in particle physics has a more abstract character than a business problem that has to address myriad concrete realities.¹⁶³

In today's business environment, the only distinction of organisation strategy is mainly the application of the acquired knowledge which takes place during the learning process. The acquisition and application of knowledge is done by people in an organisation and this process links talent and knowledge management. The ability to learn faster than your competitors is the only sustainable strategic advantage and this happens through the learning process which involves the acquisition and application of knowledge, skills and experience that changes behaviour, thought and beliefs that result into improved performance.¹⁶⁴

3.4 Knowledge management

The concept of knowledge management has been in use for many decades, but an accurate definition of what it is, has been very ambiguous. The reason why there are various definitions stems from the fact that knowledge management is a field that is applied in various disciplines and depending on the value and application the interpretation will be different as well. The other main reason why there is confusion in defining the term knowledge management is because the practice of managing knowledge is different from organisation to organisation.¹⁶⁵

A number of scholars and practitioners have defined knowledge management through various lenses and one of it is that knowledge management is a common business practice and

¹⁶³ Child J, Ihrig M, 2013. Knowledge, Organisation, and Management.

¹⁶⁴ Vaiman V, Vance CM, 2008. Smart talent management: building knowledge assets for competitive advantage

¹⁶⁵ Stevens HR, 2010. Managing Human Capital. How to Use Knowledge management to Transfer Knowledge in Today's Multi-Generational Workforce.

theoretical field of study where an effort is applied to gain from the knowledge that lies within an organisation by using it to attain the organisation's strategic agenda.¹⁶⁶

Another definition of importance to our discussion is that knowledge management is a process of enhancing organisation performance by devising and implementing tools, processes, systems, structures, and cultures, to improve the creation, sharing and use of knowledge of the benefit of the employees and the company. Knowledge management is also referred to as the strategic effort by an organisation to gain and utilise knowledge within the organisation to achieve the organisation's intended mission.¹⁶⁷ Another close definition is that knowledge management is the organisation's strategy which involves processes of identifying, capturing and leveraging of knowledge to improve competitiveness through ability development, sharing, deposit as well as delivering knowledge for decision making.¹⁶⁸

Knowledge management involves continuous learning by the employees within that particular organisation. Nonaka in his book quoted Senge's argument that "at the heart of a learning organisation is a shift of mind – from seeing ourselves as separated from the world to being connected to the world, from seeing problems as caused by someone or something "out there" to seeing how our own actions create problems we experience. Another definition of knowledge management is that is it the generation, representation, storage, transfer, transformation, application, embedding, and protecting of the organisation's knowledge.¹⁶⁹

Knowledge is created in an organisation through the process of learning and discovering new ideas which result into the knowledge organisation's use. Knowledge is also a result of reflection and experience and is acquired through storytelling, rules, actions and the environment in which one is and resides in both individuals and in teams or groupings of the society. The only means of any organisation to remain competitive is by utilising the knowledge through knowledge management.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ McInerney C, 2002. Knowledge management and the Dynamic Nature of Knowledge.

¹⁶⁷ Gephart M, Marsick V, Van Buren M, Spiro M, 1996. Learning Organizations Come Alive.

¹⁶⁸ Vaiman V, Vance CM, 2008. Smart talent management. building knowledge assets for competitive advantage.

¹⁶⁹ Alavi M, Leidner D, 2001. Knowledge management and Knowledge management Systems.

¹⁷⁰ Vaiman V, Vance CM, 2008. Smart talent management: building knowledge assets for competitive advantage.

3.5 Knowledge management theories

This study, therefore, attempts to compare the concept of talent against the theories of knowledge management, and identify the ideal of talent in this context. Below are the identified theories and chosen understanding of ideal talent.

One of the common theories in knowledge management is Nonaka's theory of knowledge creation. In his theory, Nonaka specifies two types of knowledge which are explicit and tacit and expresses that knowledge creation is enhanced by social factors. The explicit knowledge is the knowledge which is easily communicated in form of data, procedures, and practices and expressed in words or numbers. Then tacit knowledge begins at the individual level, it is often context specific and very difficult to communicate. It is actually the knowledge that is embedded in one's mental models, beliefs and perceptions. Nonaka's coined his knowledge creation theory in a model which is referred to as the SECI model, incorporating socialisation, externalisation, combination and internalisation.¹⁷¹

3.5.1 SECI model

What is very cardinal to the SECI model is that knowledge is converted from one stage to the other. In the internalisation stage, the explicit knowledge is converted to tacit knowledge by the individuals involved in the process of knowledge acquisition. Then externalisation is the opposite of internalisation. During this phase, tacit knowledge is converted to explicit knowledge in form of intuitions, images, models, metaphors and intangible statements. In the combination phase, there is explicit to explicit knowledge. While during the socialisation phase individuals will communicate openly in meetings, through the process of questioning personal beliefs and organisation beliefs.¹⁷²

Overtime, the knowledge creating theory has been redefined by Nonaka to encompass the knowledge-based approach to organisations that views organisations as knowledge creating entities. Nonaka added that organisations will be separated in terms of sustainable competitiveness by the knowledge and the capability to create and utilise the same knowledge. It is through these relationships that social ties to develop organisation and individuals within the organisation are created. The knowledge the organisation and individuals possess shape the scope and direction of the search for new knowledge which, in turn, create the knowledge

¹⁷¹ Nonaka I, Tekauchi H, 1995. The Knowledge-Creating Company

¹⁷² Nonaka I, Tekauchi H, 1995. The Knowledge-Creating Company

dependant pathway.¹⁷³ The SECI model has been considered incomplete by Firestone. Firestone argues that the model lacks the definition of implicit which could have resulted in a number of knowledge conversions. It has been suggested that SECI model should have been reformulated to look at the wider picture of knowledge conversions¹⁷⁴

The SECI model helps one to understand that knowledge is acquired through experience and it is from this that it can be stated that talent is acquired through experience. The process of conversion from one quadrant to the other involves processing an issue which translates into knowledge that is used by the individuals. Based on Nonaka's perspective, knowledge is treated as a thing and not as flow. This understanding implies that the approach to managing knowledge is adjusted for sufficiently covering the thing.

A different dimension to the tacit knowledge is Tsoukas' understanding of tacit knowledge. Tsoukas argued that tacit knowledge has been grossly misunderstood by organisation and management studies due to misinterpretation by Nonaka and Takeuchi who interpreted tacit knowledge as knowledge not yet articulated waiting for conversion into explicit. Further, Tsoukas added that tacit knowledge cannot be captured or converted but can be displayed or manifested in what people do.¹⁷⁵ This is unlike novel knowledge which comes about when the skilled performance is punctuated in new ways through social interaction and not when tacit becomes explicit knowledge.¹⁷⁶ It has also been argued that tacit or explicit knowledge cannot be used by itself to acquire the other or to convert into the other form of knowledge. Each form of knowledge does its own work with no reliance on the other form of knowledge.¹⁷⁷

3.5.2 Cynefin model

Another model which looks at knowledge as both a thing and a flow¹⁷⁸ is the Cynefin model. The Cynefin model rejects Nonaka's SECI model, but considered knowledge management as an oxymoron and assumes that knowledge is converted from tacit to explicit indicating that it provides the limited set of models and tools. Further, the fundamental intention of the Cynefin

¹⁷³ Vance CM, Vaiman V, 2008. Smart talent management: building knowledge assets for competitive advantage

¹⁷⁴ Firestone JM, McElroy M, 2003. Key Issues in the New Knowledge management

¹⁷⁵ Tsoukas H, 2002. Knowledge as Action, Organization as Theory

¹⁷⁶ Tsoukas H, 2001. Knowledge as Action, Organization as Theory

¹⁷⁷ Cook SDN, Brown BS, 1999. Bridging Epistemologies: The Generative Dance between Organisation knowledge and Organisation knowing.

¹⁷⁸ Snowden D, 2002. Complex Acts of knowing. Paradox and Descriptive Self Awareness

model is to enable sense making by augmenting awareness of borders and activating with a border transition a different model of decision making, leadership or community. The Cynefin model is also based on the understanding of science as complex adaptive systems and applies characteristics of known, knowable, complex and chaotic. The characteristics space of known, knowable, complex and chaotic are referred to as domains and not quadrant demarcated by borders.¹⁷⁹

The *known space* is considered to be the only legitimate domain of best practice and assumes that within the known limits, behaviour can be predicted and prescribed. In this domain, the items or things can be categorised and responded to as it is known. Then the *knowable domain* is the space of good practice. It is referred to as the domain of experts as the expertise is applied rather than categorisation where the human imposes order and it's more fluid than the known space. In essence, it is the expertise that is applied to understand the situation and respond. The other space is the *complex domain* which is referred to as the management of patterns. The complex domain assumes that most humans make decisions based on the past or perceived future patterns and not through rational choices.

While the *chaotic domain* represents the consequence of excessive structural or massive change and requires crisis management, it is not a comfortable domain. It is also referred to as the action space or domain as the most important aspect is to act and then respond later.¹⁸⁰

It is believed that all knowledge is acquired through reasoning and the use of concepts and methods that are freed as much as possible from the fallibilities of our senses or the existences of given situations.¹⁸¹ A person who is knowledgeable at a place of work usually performs the duties better than the one who is not knowledgeable and, in the end, he is considered as talented. Based on this perspective, it will be in order to state that knowledge is acquired and not inborn, which implies that talent is also acquired as stated earlier. The closest example is the Polanyi's example of riding a bicycle to emphasise the point on knowledge. No one was born knowing how to ride a bicycle, but it is practice that makes one perfect the art of riding. The best cyclist will be considered to be talented because the individual has mastered the art of riding a bicycle well. This applies in many spheres of the work environment. The ones considered as potential

¹⁷⁹ Snowden D, 2002. Complex Acts of knowing. Paradox and Descriptive Self Awareness

¹⁸⁰ Snowden D, 2002. Complex Acts of knowing. Paradox and Descriptive Self Awareness

¹⁸¹ Cook SDN, Brown BS, 1999. Bridging Epistemologies. The Generative Dance between Organisation knowledge and Organisation knowing.

or high performers at work are those that have taken the interest to understand their roles and business expectations.

Human beings are always inquisitive and this results in search of the solutions or understanding of the situations they find themselves in. This relates to productive inquiry which refers to actively pursuing a problem, puzzle point of fascination; object of wonder or to seek the answer or a solution. The motivation is to understand the problem better and satisfy ones needs. *“Productive Inquiry is that aspect of any activity where we are deliberately seeking what we need, in order to do what we want.”*¹⁸² This results into knowledge acquisition and when one acquires the knowledge they become an expert or reliable person in the organisation, and in the end, they are termed as talented people. This resonates with the concept that talent is acquired because one becomes better through the knowledge that they have acquired and nothing else. It is a matter of interest which forces people to engage in productive inquiry, otherwise, one would not spend their time if there is no interest in the faculty of their endeavours. The interest depends on a number of factors such as finding a solution to the problem, fear of failure and to be valued in an organisation or community or any social context.

Knowledge is acquired by the individuals in an organisation through tapping into the organisation memory. The organisational memory is composed of the artefacts’, physical architecture, stories, heroes and formal and information structures.¹⁸³ Organisation memory is also considered six brain storage” composed of individuals, transformations, culture, ecology, structure and external archives.”¹⁸⁴ This means that the skills and talents of an individual will be developed with the exposure to the environment they are working in. One will only be considered as having top talent if the individual conforms to the behaviour or norms of the organisation which are embedded in the organisation culture, structures and the ecology. Therefore, it can be deduced that knowledge is acquired and it is the knowledge workers who are considered to be talented.

Talent is acquired through learning and it is human nature to adapt and learn about the environment for survival or know how. Spender stated that managers in all the entries learn a particular industry recipe that is a set of distinctions tied to a particular field of exposure. The

¹⁸² Cook SDN, Brown BS, 1999. Bridging Epistemologies: The Generative Dance between Organisation knowledge and Organisation knowing.

¹⁸³ Spender JC, 1996, "Organizational knowledge, learning and memory: three concepts in search of a theory"

¹⁸⁴Walsh JP, Ungson GR, 1991. Organizational memory

learning ranges from market segmentation, the kind of employees, employer's expectations, the regulators in the industrial as well as the code of conduct.¹⁸⁵ Tsoukas mentioned that to be a competent member of the industry one needs to make competent use of key understanding of the terminologies which need to be learnt on the Job. Further, it was well known that knowledge is created through the process of making distinctions.¹⁸⁶ This also refers to intelligence as an acquired ability, as Tuoma stated that researchers in the 1950s and 1960s became more convinced that intelligence required domain specific knowledge.¹⁸⁷

The other point of emphasis comes from the images of knowledge as termed by Collins. The images of knowledge are embrained, embodied, embedded, encultured and encoded. The embrained knowledge refers to the knowledge that is dependent on conceptual skills and cognitive abilities. The embodied knowledge denotes the action-oriented knowledge which is partly explicit and acquired by doing and deeply rooted in specific context. Encultured knowledge refers to the process of achieving the shared understanding. It also relates to the process of socialisation and acculturation. The embedded knowledge means the knowledge that is embedded in systems, routines and procedures.¹⁸⁸

The knowledge workers are considered to be talented in organisations because they use knowledge that they have acquired during the working career. When it comes to organisations, a talented person is considered as someone who is specialised and good at achieving organisations objectives and contributing some value to the organisation. This supports the notion that talent in the context of organisations is not inborn but acquired. If one may ask who was born a computer scientist, lawyer, banker, economist, accountant, product developer or sales personnel, there will be none, but in organisations, people are considered to be talented in specific professions because they have acquired the necessary knowledge and skill for them to be able to perform their roles. Therefore, the ideal perspective of talent is that it is acquired and not inborn. All the images of knowledge point to the fact that knowledge is acquired and it is this knowledge that is used for someone to perform in an organisation. Hence, talent in the context of organisation is an acquired phenomenon. As already alluded to, knowledge is created in the individual's head by making sense out of the situations or environment encountered.

¹⁸⁵ SpenderJC, 1989. Organisational Knowledge, Learning and Memory.

¹⁸⁶ Tsoukas H, 2000. Knowledge as Action, Organisation as Theory.

¹⁸⁷Toumi I, 2002. The future of knowledge management.

¹⁸⁸ Blackler F, 1995. Knowledge, Knowledge Work and Organisations.

Sense making is one of the organisational theories which are linked to knowledge management and through the application of sense making; organisations create knowledge using their Human Resources. Sense making entails the turning of situations into a state that is comprehended unequivocal in words and that serves as a catalyst into an action. The process of sense making involves application or support of the mental models which will help an individual to recognise what he or she has seen before and makes sense of such a situation. If the issue or the subject matter is not falling within what can be noticed, bracketed or labelling, the process of sense making starts with the chaotic situations and understanding the situation and then making the required action.¹⁸⁹ This reverberates with the talent concept in organisations, the individuals who perform or are considered to be talented are those who are able to quickly make sense of the organisation's expectations and act accordingly. The quick action and futuristic focus is what differentiates the top talent in organisations and this can only be done through the process or sense making. It is for this reason that talent it is argued, is acquired and not inborn especially in the context of an organisation.

3.6 Organisational learning

A learning organisation is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality, and how they can change it.¹⁹⁰

One cannot talk about individual talent and organisational talent as two distinct entities. Individual and organisational talents are interrelated. Successful organisations are moving away from training individual employees as something which they have done for a long time in order to enhance and up-grade individual skills to becoming 'learning organisations'. These special capabilities should be flexible, durable and difficult to imitate.

The Internet and its variant the intranet is being used to develop individual talent by enabling individuals to share their knowledge via e-channels and by recording their knowledge so that at least, some aspects of tacit knowledge are made explicit by recording after action reviews. For example, one project company requires all its employees to record their experience after completion of their projects, and to share this experience via electronic media to those who are interested and require this information so as not to reinvent the wheel when working on subsequent projects. Some companies have now embarked on e-learning, which makes use of

¹⁸⁹ Weick KE, 1995. Sense Making in Organisations.

¹⁹⁰ Nonaka I, 1994. A dynamic theory of organizational knowledge creation.

all the advantages of the Internet. It allows content to be current and relevant and employees can develop their talent at their own time, and in the mode they choose.

3.7 Talent and knowledge management

3.7.1 Talent definition and knowledge management practices

One could question whether the definition of talent has an impact on knowledge management practices. The response to this is that the definition of talent does not change the knowledge management practices but, depending on the definition that has been adopted in that particular organisation, knowledge management can be enhanced. If talent is defined as innate, the organisation will mainly focus on a small group of people who contribute to the organisation as top performers. The concentration of effort and support is mainly restricted to a small group of people. This has the effect that some of the individuals within the organisation are left out, with the result that they contribute less to the organisation or knowledge management practices. On the other hand, when talent is defined as something that is acquired, it changes how people managers view talent across the organisation. When talent is defined as something which is acquired, the talent ecology in the organisation will involve everyone in that establishment.

3.7.2 The relation of talent and knowledge management

It is very important to understand the relationship between talent management and knowledge management in an organisation. One could ask whether talent management is more than knowledge management and the answer to this is a definite no. Talent management is one of the functions of human resource management and can be considered as one of the subsets of knowledge management. Much as talent management is a way of life in an organisation, knowledge management is basically a culture that is all encompassing. Talent management complements knowledge management in organisations.

Knowledge management is defined as a process of enhancing organisational performance by devising and implementing tools, processes, systems, structures and cultures, to improve the creation, sharing and use of knowledge for the benefit of the employees and the company. Also, knowledge management is referred to as the strategic effort by an organisation to gain and utilise knowledge within the organisation to achieve the organisation's intended mission.¹⁹¹ This definition explains it all as knowledge management looks across an organisation to make

¹⁹¹ GephartM, Marsick V, Van Buren M, Spiro M, 2006. Learning Organizations Come Alive.

better decisions.

While talent management only looks at the process of attracting, motivating and developing the employees within an organisation so that they will become more productive and contribute effectively to meeting the current and future needs of the organisation¹⁹². Talent management is a human resource management concept but knowledge management cuts across functions in an organisation. The contribution of knowledge management to an organisation is influenced by the successful management of the people who have vital knowledge in that particular organisation.¹⁹³

Knowledge management is a broad approach that applies to every area of an enterprise and by its nature talent management coexists with it. In essence talent management is part of knowledge management because the systems, procedures and people fall within the ambit of knowledge management. For example, when the attraction of talent through the recruitment process uses the system which is part of knowledge management, then the online application and assessment will form part of the knowledge management system in an organisation. All these HR information systems form part of the HR data analytics decision-making systems that support the organisation in terms decision-making. The management of talent is just one of the HR management functions. There are other HR functions that fall within knowledge management. These are performance management, reward management, employee engagement and HR operations. All these HR streams form part of the organisation information systems that feed into knowledge management systems for decision-making in an organisation.

Apart from the support of Knowledge management in the HR space, it also looks at the organisation in general with regards to procedures, processes and systems in order to meet the strategic agenda of the organisation. This cuts across the organisation, ranging from the systems interfaces with the clients or customers to the internal systems which result in data mining for decision-making. An organisation can have a talent management system in place but if there is no knowledge management, the strategic initiatives of the organisation may not be met. However, meeting organisation strategic agenda is more than developing talent. For an organisation to have a competitive edge and build strategic capability in knowledge, at least four components are needed and that it is knowledge systems, networks, knowledge workers

¹⁹² Bano H, 2011. Schematising talent management, a core business issue.

¹⁹³ Bieńkowska1 A, Ignacek-Kuźnicka B, 2017. The dilemma of knowledge management in organisation.

and a learning organisation.¹⁹⁴

Talent management in a number of organisations only focuses on a small group of people and the main culprits are human resource practitioners who usually limit the programme only to the top talent or executive leadership talent. The main reason for a limited approach to talent management is that a good number of human resource practitioners do not understand what knowledge management is. For talent management to contribute fully to knowledge management, human resource practitioners need to have an appreciation of knowledge management.

As Tansley also mentioned, talent management schemes usually do not consider those in low skilled roles and they miss certain demographics, such as older workers who have organisational memory and expertise in their roles.¹⁹⁵ To put things into better context, one of the participants who participated in the focus group conducted by Whelan and Carcary, put it as follows:

“Every employee creates useful knowledge at one time or another. We don’t have a problem generating new ideas. I think if we mandated knowledge creation to a small number of employees who we think are talented [...] this could even have a negative impact. The rest of the workforce might think that creativity is not part of their job. OK, some people are better at coming up with innovative ideas [...] but our problem is not creating knowledge, it’s trying to figure out what ideas to go with at what times”

In this knowledge economy an organisation needs well integrated systems to be able to respond to the competition and make well informed decision using the available systems. For example, in the banking or telecommunications sectors there can be talented people but if the systems are not integrated, nothing can be achieved. Organisations are now investing in artificial intelligence and advanced data mining tools to manage businesses. Knowledge management is the only way for an organisation to survive. If the organisation understands talent and talent management and further applies the practices in an organisation, the benefits are huge. The creativity which might flow from the development of talent can only be realised and appreciated if there is a conducive environment which is supportive of functional knowledge

¹⁹⁴ Prusak L, 1997. Knowledge in Organisation.

¹⁹⁵ Tansley C, 2011. What do we mean by the term “talent” in talent management?

management. ¹⁹⁶

3.7.3 Knowledge and talent sharing concept

Another question can arise on whether talent can be shared and if not, what is the point of asking for knowledge sharing? Firstly, what should be understood is that talent and knowledge are two different phenomena. Knowledge can be shared but talent can not be shared. It can, however, be acquired through deliberate practice. Talent cannot be embedded in the system but knowledge can. An artificial intelligence system can not be called a talented system but a human being can be called a talented person.

The talent notion that accords with knowledge management theory is that talent is acquired through deliberate and intense practice. The notion resonates with the knowledge management philosophy and has an impact on knowledge management outcomes. Through deliberate intense practice, talent is built and knowledge in an organisation is increased. When there is new knowledge created in an organisation it makes the organisation to be more productive and competitive.

The other reason why talent as an acquired ability flourishes in a knowledge management environment is that knowledge management provides the right environment to grow knowledge. Knowledge management provides the right culture for organisational learning which in turn contributes to the new knowledge and retention of talented employees. This is important and crucial especially with the recruitment of millennials who are tech savvy, they want an environment that is update to date with processes and procedures for them to contribute effectively to the organisation. This in itself act as a retention strategy as the organisation will provide an enabling environment conducive for the talent within he organisation.

A fully fledged knowledge management contributes largely to the productivity of the organisation by providing the necessary tools and easy process work flow. For example, using knowledge management an organisation can invest in the engagement tool to be able to conduct the survey to understand the employee's expectations and morale. Once the data is obtained it will be help to improve the work environment by applying the suggestion or actions plans coming from the survey. Also, the decision to reward outstanding performers will be fair if there is proper use and appreciation of knowledge management systems.

¹⁹⁶ Tansley C, 2011. What do we mean by the term "talent" in talent management?

Chapter 4

Overview of Talent and Knowledge Management in Zambian organisations

4.1 Introduction

A number of organisations in Zambia have got a fair or balanced understanding of talent and have talent management systems in place. On whether those talent management systems are delivering the required results is another discussion. The observation and evaluation of talent in the 10 selected organisations are based on public domain and no interviews were conducted. The public domain, mainly refers to annual reports, websites and journals posted on the internet. This means that the information obtained from the public domain may not be the happenings actual or interpretation of all the employees or management of the organisations in Zambia but assumed to be close to reality or what is being practiced by the identified or sampled organisations.

To have a better understanding and spread of the interpretation of the talent in Zambia a total number of 10 companies or organisations across the country were sampled for the study. There are 2 telecommunications companies, 2 financial institutions, 2 manufacturing companies, 2 mining companies, 2 semi quasi government institutions. The following are the organisations sampled with a discussion of their understanding of talent.

4.2 Barclays Bank Zambia

Barclays Bank Zambia has over 800 employees and its head office is based in South Africa trading under the ABSA name. It is one of the International Banks in Zambia. One of the Human Resources report for Barclays Bank shows that the human resource department supports the Bank in matters of recruitment to retention, skills development and talent

management. In addition, Barclays Bank aims at creating best possible experiences for its employees who are starting their careers. Further, Barclays makes sure that all the employees are given the opportunity to grow and develop. The report also reveals that the organisation keeps the employees at the heart of what it does and they always aim at growing employees and future leaders so that they can help the organisation to flourish. In identifying talent, Barclays Bank takes the candidates through assessments and looks out for particular strengths and cognitive character traits and skills that resonate with the Barclays brand.¹⁹⁷

Apart from the business as usual recruitment process, the Bank also has graduate programmes in place to help train the future leaders so that the organisation has the required human resource to fill top leadership positions in the organisation. These employees are exposed to the culture and ethos of the organisation as well as the vision of the organisation. The Bank's graduate programme exposes the new sharp entrants to all the business units for them to understand the organisation and the business processes and procedures as well as the products and products life cycle that the organisation offers. The reason why this is done is to ensure that the new people coming to work in the organisation are equipped with the required knowledge and skills for them to be able to deliver to the organisation. Upon graduation, the graduates are allocated positions to pick from based on their strengths and preferences.¹⁹⁸

The Group Director Human Resource – Cathy Turner mentioned that talent management is a priority in Human Resource Department and on top of the agenda for Barclays Bank Senior Management. The organisation has talent management in place to retain the skilled and top performers.¹⁹⁹ The process of talent management and identification used is the 9-box grid. Using this process, management is able to identify the strengths and the weaknesses of the identified talent and then work on their weaknesses to develop them so that they can able to reach the required performance level. This talent identification approach looks at every individual in an organisation as talented and having the potential to grow and contribute effectively to the organisation. The individuals' weaknesses and strengths are identified and

¹⁹⁷ Barclays Bank Plc, 2015. Your Human Resource: A Brief overview of Barclays HR.

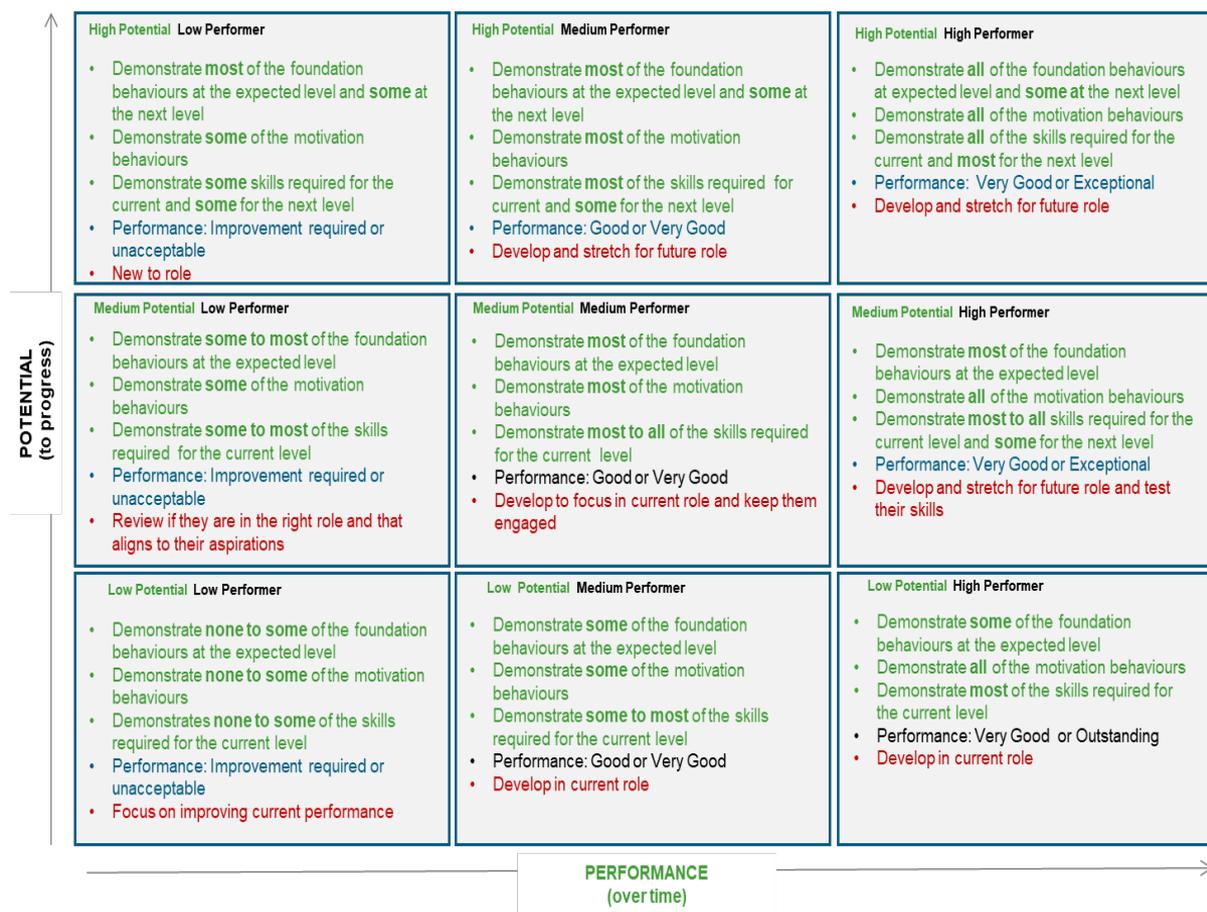
¹⁹⁸ Barclays Bank Plc, 2015. Your Human Resource: A Brief overview of Barclays HR.

¹⁹⁹ Barclays Bank Plc. 2017. Inside HR: Interview with Cathy Turner, Barclays' HR director. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/jobs/inside-hr/8147020/Inside-HR-Interview-with-Cathy-Turner-Barclays-HR-director.html>

the organisation takes interest in utilising the strengths and provides deliberate platform to improve on the individual’s weaknesses.²⁰⁰

Below is the example of 9Box grid that is used for talent management. It shows below average performance up to outstanding performance and on the potential it shows the potential from limited potential to high potential. This is used to classify the potential and performance of the employee and come up with initiatives for management actions.

Figure 4.2.1 9-BOX GRID²⁰¹



All the materials that have been reviewed about Barclays either locally or internationally indicate the same belief about talent management, but no definition of what talent means has been given. However, what comes out clearly is that the organisation puts talent management as a priority in the organisation and creates an environment for skills development. Based on

²⁰⁰ Barclays Bank Plc, 2015. A Brief overview of Barclays HR. Your Human Resource

²⁰¹ Society for Human Resource Management, 2019. Succession Planning: What is a 9-box grid?
<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/hr-qa/pages/whatsa9boxgridandhowcananhrdepartmentuseit.aspx>

the recruitment, selection criteria of using assessment, the organisation ensures that people have different skills and strengths which can be developed. In short, the organisation fundamentally assumes that people are born unique otherwise the assessment cannot be used. In the context of Barclays, the approach talent is viewed as that something someone is born with, but the practices of the organisation reveal that the individual can be developed into anything as long as there is exposure and understanding of what is expected of the person.

4.3 Standard Chartered Bank

Standard Chartered Bank recognises that to provide superior performance and meet the shareholders' expectations, the Bank should thrive on talent that it has grown and which it keeps on attracting. The Standard Chartered 2016 Annual Report shows that the Human Resource function at the global and regional levels, which includes Zambia, is to recruit and build talent while providing learning opportunities to motivate the employees.²⁰²

The annual report also reveals that the Board of Directors also believes that Standard Chartered Bank has got a clear strategic plan and exceptionally talented employees who are able to execute the plan. The organisation also uses the employee opinion survey for employees to air out their views and considers them as a commitment to ensuring an all-inclusive environment, free from bias for everyone to realise their potential. The annual report also indicates that the Bank is committed to grow its talent to better align its leadership composition in its footprint.²⁰³

Further, Standard Chartered believes in rewarding its exceptional performers and awards them with incentives over and above the average performer in order to retain, attract and retain the exceptional performers. The incentives actually increased by 5% from the 2016 performance and illustrates the committed in fighting the war for talent.

In addition, the organisation has what is known as International Graduate programme which is a management trainee programme with the aim of creating future leaders for the Bank. The candidates are selected using the three-step assessment which starts with online assessments, video interviews and assessment centres (group discussions, role plays and face to face interviews). These are benchmarked against the competencies which the organisations set as the minimum requirements. The successive candidates are put on a rotation programme which involves rotation of the trainees in various functions and segments to enable them to have a full

²⁰² Standard Chartered Bank Plc. 2016. How we serve employees. Annual Report

²⁰³ Standard Chartered Bank Plc. 2017. How we serve employees. Annual Report

appreciation of banking. At the end of the programme, candidates are asked to choose the career of their choice. One of the statements from the career website runs the captions:

“There is no map to success at Standard Chartered you have to draw your own.”²⁰⁴

The available information from the annual reports and materials on the group website reveals that Standard Chartered Bank appreciates talent management, despite not explicitly defining what talent in an organisational context is. The other conclusion is that Standard Chartered Bank believes in creating an enabling environment for talent to thrive. This can be confirmed by the Group CEO – Bill Winter’s statement in the annual report, that Standard Chartered Bank creates an environment to grow talent through learning opportunities provided to the employees across the group. Then the approach to the selection criteria reveals that individuals are not born or do not have the same skills, which means that there is a difference in cognitive abilities. Based on this assessment, it will be fair to classify Standard Chartered Bank as an organisation which believes that a conducive environment is necessary to grow the right talent of individuals and in addition, the organisation belongs to the school of thought that believes that talent is innate and not everyone contributes the same and understands the same.

Further, the rotation programme that the organisation has put in place means that a person can only perform well if they have acquired the required knowledge about the organisation and processes. To some extent, the employees who are considered talented are those who take the challenge to acquire the required levels of knowledge to enable them perform. Much as the organisation has taken the approach that talent is innate and people are unique in their own ways, the process of recruitment and the management of talent within the organisation say something else. The practice of talent management suggests that an enabling environment is conducive to grow the talent and that providing training to the employees will make them understand the organisation thereby performing. Even the rotation programme, induction and product training suggest that anyone can become exceptional at anything as long as the training is provided. For example, no employee of the Bank can be sent to sell a product which he or she does not understand, but what the Bank does is to educate or train employees or sales staff to understand the product offering before engaging with the customers or clients.

²⁰⁴ Standard Chartered Bank plc, 2016. Driving investment, trade and the creation of wealth across Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Sustainability Summary Report

4.4 Bank of Zambia (Central Bank)

The Bank of Zambia (BOZ) is the Central Bank of the Republic of Zambia and derives its function and powers from the Bank of Zambia Act. The Bank of Zambia mission statement is to achieve and maintain price and sound financial system stability to foster sustainable economic development of the country.

The Central Bank employees about 600 employees and it is focused on attracting, recruiting, developing and retaining a cadre of professionals that hold professional promise to contribute meaningfully to the achievement of price and financial system stability of Zambia. In addition, the Central Bank offers young graduates from various tertiary institutions within Zambia internship programme that allows them to gain practical skills that they can use in the work place. The Central Bank also encourages creative thinking and innovation in line with its culture.²⁰⁵

The Bank has got a talent management programme in place and there are various initiatives which are in place to make sure that the talent within the Central Bank is retained for proficiency. Some of the initiatives which are in place are engagement to provide the right environment in which talent can flourish and performance management system where performers are recognised for their unwavering contribution to the Bank. In addition, the Central Bank has a compelling employee value proposition and rewards the performer through career growth and financial rewards.²⁰⁶

Based on the understanding and the approach the organisation uses, it is clear that the Bank of Zambia recognises that there is a word talent although no definition has been provided. The information available at the time of the review of the documentation does not suggest that talent is innate or inborn. However, talent is made in reference to the dedicated, committed and passionate employees who contribute immensely to the effectiveness and efficiency management of the institution. The internship programme in place is an indication that the Central Bank acknowledges that talent is learnt through practice and an individual can acquire the skill which is relevant to their profession to enable them to contribute effectively. Further,

²⁰⁵ Bank of Zambia, 2017. Working at the Bank of Zambia. <http://www.boz.zm/careers.htm>

²⁰⁶ Bank of Zambia, 2015. Corporate Strategic Plan 2016-2019. To Develop and strengthen the Bank's Talent Management and Technologies so as to achieve operational efficiency and effectiveness.

the corporation also acknowledges that an enabling environment is needed as it is necessary to ensure that the talent or skill is improved.²⁰⁷

4.5 Airtel Zambia

Airtel Zambia is one of the largest and top performing telecommunication companies in Zambia. It has the total employee headcount of about 243 as at December, 2016. The 2016 Annual Report and Financial statement reflect that the organisation performed very well during the year 2016 due to the dedication and unquestionable commitment of a talented team of employees led by a strong and experienced management team. The organisation recognises the contribution of talented employees.²⁰⁸

According to Katha, the Airtel Group Human Resource Director stated that at Airtel there is an effort and resolve to win with people. They have a programme called Young Leaders programme where Airtel engages a very young talent and allowing a young talent to experience the best of the corporate world for them to learn various organisational challenges while the organisation is building on the leadership capability for the future. The candidates are picked based on the school performance and are trained for them to become experts in various fields at Airtel. The staff is also exposed to work in various markets to make them global telecom leaders. Airtel's recruitment process is based on the recruitment of the young talent who are then mentored to become experts in the various fields. The Human Resource Director further mentioned that the employees who are on Young Leaders Programme and those identified as young potentials are ring fenced with incentives and recognition awards so that they do not move to the competing organisations.²⁰⁹

In addition to the Young Leaders Programme, Airtel introduced what is known as organisation talent reviews which aimed at creating a common view of the organisation's capability gaps and talent pipeline for the critical business areas. Through the talent reviews, management is able to identify high potential and high performing employees through the series of discussions and assessment. Once the performing employees are identified, they are assisted with vital on-the-job training to help them realise the potential and areas of interests.

²⁰⁷ Bank of Zambia, 2015. Corporate Strategic Plan 2016-2019. To Develop and strengthen the Bank's Talent Management and Technologies so as to achieve operational efficiency and effectiveness

²⁰⁸ Airtel Zambia, 2016. Annual Report and Financial Services Report. Letter to the shareholders.

²⁰⁹ Airtel, 2016. How Airtel leverages young talent to stay ahead in business. <https://www.hrkata.com/how-airtel-leverages-young-talent-to-stay-ahead-in-business/>

On the Airtel website under recruitment, it is stated that Airtel hires passion. If a person is determined to deliver best in class products and services that enrich the customers, determined to make Airtel increase its global footprint and make a difference in everything they do, then Airtel is a place for them to work.²¹⁰

There are a number of sources which the organisation uses to identify talent, but the selection criteria involve the following stages:

- i. Telephonic Screening: This is the first step carried out by the trained recruiter. The recruiter through this telephonic screen gathers basic information such as work history and salary requirements.
- ii. Online Assessments: This involves the selection of candidates through the writing of online situational strength finder.
- iii. Functional Interview: Unless the report from the online test assessment is grossly skewed towards a non-fitment, most candidates advance to the functional round. A Functional interview is conducted by a subject matter expert or hiring manager. This step in the recruitment process gauges a candidate's functional knowledge through specific competency-based interview questions.
- iv. The fourth and final round is an Interview with a Panel: Having cleared the functional round of interview, a candidate, then advances to the final round of interview with a panel that mostly comprises of the hiring manager's manager and the unit Human Resource manager. At this stage, reports from the value fitment test and competency fitment test, are utilised to probe more in order to understand the fitment with the candidate sighting specific instances and critical incidents from his/her previous experience.²¹¹

The available information on Airtel shows us that the organisation of group and local level recognises the importance of talented employees in running the organisation. Further, there is recognition that talent has to be developed for it to be appreciated, but there is no definite understanding of what talent is. What is also clear is that the organisation considers passion as

²¹⁰ Airtel, 2016. How Airtel leverages young talent to stay ahead in business. <https://www.hrkaatha.com/how-airtel-leverages-young-talent-to-stay-ahead-in-business/>

²¹¹ Airtel Zambia. 2017. Recruitment Careers. <http://www.africa.airtel.com/wps/wcm/connect/africarevamp/Zambia/home/about/careers/>

the main attribute and also views individuals as having to accumulate skills for them to work effectively. Further, the organisation believes that individuals are born with different endowment, but upon training they will be able to flourish. The outcome of the review of Airtel approach to talent is that the organisation believes in identifying the passion the person has and then trains the person as he or she can become anything he wants in life. The talent reviews in place and job rotation programme in place at Airtel is testimony enough that the organisation believes in talent management and that talent is acquired through intensive deliberate practice and exposure especially if the individuals being trained have got the passion and willingness to learn.

4.6 MTN Zambia

MTN is also one of the largest mobile subscribers with a customer base of about 5000 in 2016 out of a population of 15000 according to the Zambia Information Communication Telecommunication Authority.²¹²

The MTN philosophy is to connect the communities and shape the future. The Institution's understanding of talent is shown through its organisation pillars or values as highlighted below:

- i. Brand Strength: Providing you an opportunity to advance your career by linking you with a highly recognised, global brand
- ii. Investing in our Talent: Partnering with employees to accelerate their growth through new challenges and learning opportunities.
- iii. Total Reward and Recognition: Recognising your value through competitive rewards and recognition.
- iv. Leadership Brand: Bold and visionary leadership that communicates our vision and direction - respects, engages and develops others.
- v. Globally Diverse Culture: Accepting, respecting and embracing your uniqueness, giving you a global stage for your ideas on innovation and business improvements.²¹³

Following the review of the materials on MTN, it was found that the company does not clearly define what talent is at organisational level. Basically, the interpretation of what MTN views as talent is that individuals are unique and possess different strengths which the organisation aims at developing. This is confirmed within the first pillar which talks about providing an

²¹² Zambia Information Technology Authority. Mobile Providers coverage. <https://www.zicta.zm/>

²¹³ MTN Zambia, 2017. Careers. <http://www.mtnzambia.com/en/about-mtn/careers/Pages/default.aspx>

opportunity to advance the career of employees. MTN is like most organisations in Zambia which believe that talent can be developed but passion and commitment is everything for the employee to be successful.

MTN also believes that the right environment that is the culture, values and leadership, is very cardinal in developing talent. In addition, the organisation realises that talent can be developed by providing incentives and recognition to the employees of the organisation for them to perform at their best. That is the reason why there is a focus on reward and recognition as well as engagement.

4.7 The Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA)

The Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA) is an ICT Regulatory body responsible for regulating the ICT Sector in Zambia. It falls under the Ministry of Transport, Works, Supply and Communications and focuses on regulating and monitoring three areas, the Postal Services, Electronic Communications and Transactions, Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). The Authority employs 140 members of staff who ensure that the strategic agenda and mandates are met.²¹⁴

One of the strategic agendas of ZICTA is to enhance the capacity of the employees within the institute to deliver. On the Authority's website, there is no material which talks about talent, except a job advert on the position of Talent Management Officer. This advert gave an insight on what the Authority does with regard to talent management.

The job advert or job description of the advertised position stated that the person once employed would be responsible for the implementation of the Authority's talent management and learning and development framework to ensure systematic management of the learning system and creation of a talent pool which clearly mapped out growth paths for placement in key positions. Below are some of the key responsibilities for the position.

- i. To plan and implement talent and succession planning framework to ensure full adherence;
- ii. To develop strategies so as to ensure transparent and systematic identification of talent within the Authority;

²¹⁴ Zambia Information Communication Technology Authority. <https://www.zicta.zm/profile>.

- iii. To create talent pools and map out clear growth paths to ensure attainment of required competencies for consideration to move into key positions;
- iv. To create assessment tools to identify required competencies and establish the status of readiness for each candidate;
- v. To create a database of all staff competencies and record their progress daily;
- vi. To develop a pool of technical and behavioural competencies required for each role and point out developmental stages and growth momentum of each officer;
- vii. To develop and implement learning and development strategies to ensure that staff learning outcomes are met annually; and
- viii. To spearhead in the implementation of learning plan through a careful mix in blended learning initiatives.²¹⁵

The above job accountabilities give the understanding of what goes on in the institution with reference to talent management. The organisation puts emphasis on talent and this can be seen in the talent pools which are created in the organisation where the Authority considers that there are few employees who contribute immensely to the growth of the organisation. Based on the accountabilities of the person responsible with regard to talent management, it can be deduced that the organisation believes that individuals are born with unique abilities and strengths hence the creation of talent pools. The creation of talent pools suggests that there are a few people who should be given priority as they are the ones who possess what is required to deliver in that particular organisation. In essence, the organisation recognises that talent is innate and only a few will hugely contribute to the performance of the organisation.

4.8 Konkola Copper Mine (KCM)

Konkola Copper Mine (KCM) is one of the largest copper mines in Zambia and its headquarters is in New Delhi India. It is also one of the leading London listed natural resources company. The organisation employs staff across three major copper plants with the headcount of about 16,000. The organisation offers excellent opportunities across different business units with the opportunity for the employees to make a difference in their respective fields. The company endeavours to develop skills in order to drive for profitability and supporting the community at large. The philosophy of the organisation is to meet the company current and future through

²¹⁵ Zambia Information Communication Technology Authority. . <https://www.zicta.zm/careers>.

employee education and skills development. The organisation places great emphasis on creating opportunities for people to manage their careers by providing the foundation to allow employees' professional growth.²¹⁶

Further, Konkola Copper Mine has a strategic focus for 50 years to come and has a programme to create a talent pool to make the future leaders of the organisation who will run the organisation. Since 2006, the organisation has engaged about 247 management trainees who have been taken through a rigorous process to prepare for the sound management, efficiency and global best practice.²¹⁷

Based on the approach which Konkola Copper Mine uses, it can be deduced that the organisation believes that talent means two things, that is, that everyone has it and only a few possess what is required for the organisation to function. The mining company has also not defined what talent is. This can be seen by the statement that it provides the environment for talent to be realised and that it works with the talent pools. The talent pool concept means that there are only a few who can fit the organisation's expectations and it is usually within 10% of the organisation. This implies that talent is innate as only a few possess of what is required to move the organisation forward. Much as only a few possess what is required, the organisation provides the training to everyone.

4.9 Kansanshi Mine (First Quantum Minerals)

Kansanshi Mine PLC is one of the largest mines in the world and Zambia in particular. It is a subsidiary of First Quantum Mineral who own 80% shares in the mine. The mine is located in North-Western province, which is about 180km from Copperbelt province in Zambia and employs over 1700 staff.²¹⁸

According to the Kansashi website, the organisation believes in employing people with the right attitude as attitude beats experience. The organisation emphasises that experience is not always important and so the organisation has put in place a programme for graduate trainees. In addition to this, the organisation has partnered with the universities in Zambia, UK, South

²¹⁶ Konkola Copper Mine, 2017. Why Konkola. <http://kcm.co.zm/career/why-konkola/>

²¹⁷ Konkola Copper Mine, 2017. Employee Speak. <http://kcm.co.zm/career/employees-speak/>

²¹⁸ First Quantum Minerals Ltd. Our Business. <https://www.first-quantum.com/Our-Business/operating-mines/Kansanshi/default.aspx>

Africa, Mauritania and Finland to sponsor their employees and to equip them with mining skills.²¹⁹

The organisation's International Graduate programme is meant to equip the fresh talent from universities to groom them into the organisation's future leaders. The programme is called International Graduate Programme because it exposes the trainees to have placements and working in other countries where First Quantum has presence. The organisation believes in providing training to the employees to equip them and for it to survive in the fast-changing mining industry.²²⁰

The information available on talent management reviews that Kansanshi Mine knows that talent exists but does not define what talent is. The emphasis is based on the attitude of an individual and not experience. In addition, the organisation believes in training and impacting of knowledge in the employees for them to perform better. This can be confirmed by the training programme for international graduates who are deployed to do work rotations in various departments of the franchise. In essence, if an organisation invests in training, it also considers the learning environment for career growth and development.

4.10 Lafarge Cement

Lafarge Cement Zambia is the leading supplier of building materials and construction solutions in Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It is a member of Lafarge Holcim Group, the world leader in the building materials industry with a well-balanced presence in 90 countries and a focus on cement, aggregates and concrete. The Group has 100,000 employees around the world and combined net sales of CHF 29.5 billion in 2015.²²¹

The organisation is proud of its employees and the learning and development programme in place. The company believes that human capital is a form of investment where training and development of employees will be repaid in the form of higher-level performance. Lafarge Zambia helps individuals to build their careers with a goal of creating a borderless career for

²¹⁹ First Quantum Minerals Ltd. Our Business. <https://www.first-quantum.com/Our-Business/operating-mines/Kansanshi/default.aspx>

²²⁰ First Quantum Minerals Ltd, 2014. Sustainability report

²²¹ Lafarge Zambia Plc, 2017. Annual Report .
https://www.lafarge.co.zm/sites/zambia/files/atoms/files/annual_report_2017_v4.pdf

all its employees. The Company's Human Resources Management provides a support structure for employees to manage their careers.²²²

The organisation has a structured development, career path for engineers and artisans in the plant. It also has structured similar programmes for non-technical programmes. In addition, Lafarge has put in place a competency framework to support skills development. Further, there are short-term and long-term assignments both locally and abroad to develop the employees that have exhibited the potential to grow.

The recruitment process involves psychometric test and the top candidates are invited for the final interview. This is done to profile the strength of the individuals and so that the potential of individuals is utilised fully when they are placed in particular roles. When a person is recruited, the organisation recognises that the business success is dependent on the talents and commitment of the employees. To help employees to settle, the organisation provides a safe, supportive, robust local and international induction and orientation programmes for its employees.

Lafarge has not defined what talent means, but the organisation recognises the value of talent to the success of the business. Based on the recruitment approach, the organisation believes that every individual is talented with unique abilities; hence the use of Psychometric tests to assess the strengths. It is believed that everyone has strength and that the strength is not the same in each and every person. Only those that exhibit the highest potential are considered to be the most talented and dependable in the organisation. The organisation also provides an opportunity for the employees.

4.11 Zambian Breweries (AB InBev Subsidiary)

Zambian Breweries is one of the major manufacturers of clear and opaque beer. In addition, it is the sole distributor of Coca Cola products in Zambia. It employs over 550 people in its major plants across the country. The brewery is a subsidiary of a German company called AB InBev which also produces a number of clear beer products. The organisation firmly believes in grooming its people to deliver its strategic plan. In relation to talent management of the

²²² Lafarge Zambia Plc, 2017. Annual Report .

https://www.lafarge.co.zm/sites/zambia/files/atoms/files/annual_report_2017_v4.pdf

organisation, the company trusts in throwing people at the deep end by setting the goals that help them to grow while the individual is being agile to adapt to the new environment.²²³

Through the organisation's talent management, a Global Management Trainee programme has been put in place to hire the right staff. These university graduates are developed into well rounded global leaders to work in various markets and regions. In addition, the organisation looks at the talent within, and grows it to support the growth of the organisation through identification and creation of the new products as well as new ways of doing things.²²⁴

The training programme for the graduates is very robust and involves the global induction programme for one week, rotation in various business units for four months, individual project for four months and then graduation. This makes the trainee to be well rounded and prepared to meet the organisation's challenges. Upon graduation, employees are also partnered with experienced organisations and performing leaders to groom the graduates into the required business leaders.

There is not much information on how talent is treated within the organisation for the already existing employees, but what is clear is how the organisation recruits and grows its talent. Further, *Zambian Breweries* has not defined talent, but the organisation knows and believes in growing the talent that it hires. Based on this, it would be right to state that the organisation goes for the school of thought that talent comes with practice. It is basically hire and wire to meet the organisation's required competencies.

4.12 Summary Review of the Organisations in Zambia

The research reveals that 100% of the sampled organisations in Zambia believe that talent exists but none of them was able to define what talent is from an organisational perspective. However, the practice, sentiments and statements from all the organisations suggests that talent can be developed through practice. Hence, most of the organisation if not all emphasise the need to create an environment to develop and grow their talent. What these organisations believe is that talent is a combination of a number of factors which range from the strength of the employee on attitude to the skill and knowledge (Tacit knowledge) of the employee.

²²³ *Zambian Breweries plc.2017 Annual Report.*
<http://www.sbz.com.zm/sites/default/files/Zambian%20Breweries%20Annual%20Report%202017.pdf>

²²⁴ *Zambian Breweries plc. Why Work at AB Inbev.* <https://www.ab-inbev.com/careers/why-ab-inbev.html>

Therefore, it would be prudent to conclude that when organisations in Zambia talk about talent, they mainly refer to the skills or knowledge an individual possesses.

Further, organisations in Zambia strongly acknowledge that talent needs to be developed and that it has been revealed is through the management trainee programmes that are put in place. It can only be developed if the individual identifies his or her strength through understanding the organisational dynamics hence, the rotation system of the graduate programmes. Even though the approach appears to only Zambian companies, most of the organisations that were part of the sample are international organisations and the trend appears to be the same.

The understanding somehow shows that talent in these organisations is innate but their practice clearly shows that talent is acquired hence, the organisations providing the right environment for talent growth. Further, there no segregation when it comes to talent; that it can only be possessed by a few people, but a holistic approach has been taken. Opportunities are provided to everyone in the organisations to thrive. The findings reveal that the organisation considers everyone to be talented as long as training is provided to the individuals in the organisation. In addition, some organisations put more incentives to the ones who exceptionally perform to encourage them to continue performing at their level best so that they can continue to contribute to the organisation. In some instances, the incentives are provided so that the competitors' organisations do not poach them.

Further all the organisations in Zambia practices some form of talent management and use different methods of talent management initiatives. The intention is mainly to ensure that they build capacity in all their staff for them to contribute effectively to the sustenance and growth the organisation. It is also important to note that all the organisation provide training and development to their staff for them to execute what is expected of them. Below is the summary table of the overview of the organisation.

Figure 4.12.1: Summary overview of the Zambian organisations

Number	Organisation Name	Organisation type	Talent Definition	Talent Management	Method used	Training & Development
1	Barclays Bank	Financial	None	Yes	9 Box Grid & Management Trainee	Yes
2	Standard Chartered Bank	Financial	None	Yes	Management Trainee	Yes
3	Airtel	Telecommunication	None	Yes	Talent Reviews & Management Trainee	Yes
4	MTN Zambia	Telecommunication	None	Yes	Career Pathing	Yes
5	Bank of Zambia	Semi Quasi Govt	None	Yes	Internship & Career Pathing	Yes
6	ZICTA	Semi Quasi Govt	None	Yes	Talent Reviews & Succession	Yes
7	KCM	Mining	None	Yes	Talent Pool & Management Trainees	Yes
8	Kansash Mine	Mining	None	Yes	Graduate Management Programm	Yes
9	Lafarge Cement	Manufacturing	None	Yes	Career Pathing & Management Trainee	Yes
10	Zambian Breweries	Manufacturing	None	Yes	Graduate Management Programm	Yes

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Overview

The research reveals that talent is acquired through training, and the interpretation of the organisations that were sampled also confirms that talent is not inherited but developed through intensive and deliberate practice. The two beliefs on talent have different outcomes for the organisations that believe that talent is innate. In most of the organisations, managerial action is more focused on developing a small talent pool and not considering that everyone has the ability to learn. On the other hand, the organisations which believe that talent is acquired through training or that talent is an acquired ability also believe in identifying the strength of every employee in the organisation. This is to focus on building the individuals within the organisation. All the organisations which were sampled believed that talent is innate, but the approach of talent management in these organisations is somewhat different from what they believe in.

All the organisations are inconsistent with what they preach or believe, they indicate that talent is inherited, but their actions show that talent is something to be taught. This is evident from the rotation programme designed for the trainee or graduate programme. The employees are exposed to training for them to learn the required skills and competencies within the organisation. Organisations put up a number of training programmes to build the required capacities.

Organisational talent refers to the employees who understand their strengths and above all, have acquired the required tacit knowledge to enable them perfectly discharge their duties. In short, when someone talks about a talented person at a workplace, they always refer to the

employee who has knowledge and effectively applies it to achieve the organisational objectives.

The other facet from which a talented individual is looked at is the attitude or passion towards work. This is mainly applicable to the new entrants who are hired as a result of the potential not the knowledge, as at the time of hiring the person would not possess the knowledge to discharge specific responsibilities.

The hiring process by all the organisations which were sampled also confirms that talent is not innate, but trained and there is always something that is used to identify a talented person in an organisation. One of the things that confirm that organisations believe talent is inherited is the recruitment process which organisations use to select the candidates for the position they try to fill. One of the recruitment processes is the interview process and the other is the psychometric test. According to the Teresa Torres, the interview selection process assesses the individual on the competence and knowledge of the candidate. It basically looks at how someone reacts in situations and on whether the candidate possesses the knowledge required to perform the particular role or job.

The psychometric tests assess the cognitive abilities that are needed for an individual to be able to comprehend the particular job that he or she is being recruited for. In most instances, the psychometric assessments are set to identify candidates who meet the benchmark of the cognitive abilities that are needed in the role. This is a job selection process that has been scientifically proven to be the perfect way of employing people in an organisation. Therefore, the interpretation of this is that the organisations, when they are looking for talent, basically look for candidates who meet the profile of the role or position they desire to fill. The psychometric test only measures the cognitive abilities, but not the knowledge of the candidates. In this case, talent at the place of work means something else and does not refer to the inborn ability of an individual but to the result they get in an aptitude test.

The data from the research shows that all the companies sampled are inconsistent with what they say and practice. The entire sampled organisations believe that talent is innate and not acquired, but their selection criteria and practices with the same institutions suggest that talent is acquired through training in an organisation. Most of the organisations use the psychometric test to select the potential candidates and all that the psychometric test provides is the aptitude of certain cognitive abilities to help the management or an organisation to decide on the acceptable required cognitive ability. In addition, talent management programmes in some of

the sampled organisations suggest that talent is innate, but the approach is to train everyone in the organisation. This is also confirmed by the rotation programmes that the organisations put in place for their employees to be able to learn the organisations' system of operation. The only way knowledge can be acquired in an organisational setting is through the learning on the job and nothing else, hence, the reason why the entire organisation has to make people learn how the organisation operates.

Further, there is no one who was born as an Engineer, Banker, Doctor or Pilot, but it is through learning that one acquires the right levels of knowledge in order to function properly in a particular field. All in all, the sampled organisations are inconsistent with the view that talent is an innate philosophy because they always train people to be able to work. That is the reason why all the organisations sampled provide induction training and technical skills related trainings for an individual to be able to work effectively. For example, in the banking sector or telecommunications industry, no employee will be allowed to go and sell products without induction and products related trainings. This shows that if talent was innate, individuals would have been deployed to go and work without any form of training or induction.

According to Vance, talent is an ability acquired and applied to an individual's endeavours or work while knowledge is applied meaning of a phenomena. If one looks at the two concepts with regard to a work place, the two concepts do not have any differences at all. The reason is that a person who is considered talented is the person that has tacit knowledge relating to the particular field of work. When an organisation says that a person is knowledgeable, it means that the person has got the required knowledge or ability to execute the duties in that particular role or position they have been placed in. In an organisational context, a person who is talented is the person with tacit knowledge. Therefore, when the organisation puts in place the training and practice for the employees, it is basically to improve the tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge and once the individuals embed it in their work, they are considered to be talented. Talent in an organisational setting is basically nothing else than the knowledge a person has.

The word talent in the sampled organisations sometimes implies knowledge and that only certain people with certain strengths possess the required knowledge to be able to work in an organisation. However, the knowledge management theory itself just looks at the sharing of the knowledge and utilisation of knowledge to increase the level of tacit knowledge for the employee to perform better in what they do. What differentiates one individual from the other in acquiring the knowledge needed for the effective and efficient delivery of any task someone has been assigned is the commitment, passion and exposure one has.

The other way the two concepts can be related is through learning and practicing. The same level of tranquillity and conduciveness required to create a learning environment for the development of talent is the same requirement to increase the knowledge creation and assimilation. This can be confirmed by the organisational learning with regard to talent development. Actually, when one says that we are developing talent in the organisation, it is the same as saying we are creating an enabling environment for knowledge sharing and accumulation. The approach of talent development and knowledge creation in an organisation is just the same and the outcome probably would be the same, although in some instances there is a sense that the organisation will try to drive a different agenda. When knowledge is embedded or engrained in individuals, it is expected that the outcome is the effectiveness of running an organisation.

The other aspect that confirms that a talented person and a knowledgeable person are the same in an organisational setting is that a talented person is the one who is expected to perform exceptionally against the organisation's set objectives. In a similar fashion, the knowledgeable individual is a person that has the ability to execute exceptionally well and with a lot of precision any task assigned to them. When talent and knowledge are looked at from the performance perspective, the concepts are basically the same. This implies that looking for talented people is looking for individuals who have acquired the knowledge for effective performance.

Talent is also considered as some strength that an individual possesses and uses to the benefit of the organisation. This can also be seen from the multifaceted approach which management in the sampled organisation uses to develop employees. One example of a multifaceted approach is career planning conversations which focus on understanding the person and guiding them to the right course of their career. The other approach used is for the line manager of that particular employee to understand the strength of the employee and to utilise it. It is for this reason that most organised corporations or organisations put up performance management systems or performance appraisal systems in place so that they can be able to see the person who is performing above the set objectives and who is performing below the set objectives. The action an organisation should apply is first to support and motivate the employees who have been performing above their normal duties and motivate them so that they do not leave the organisation. On the other hand, the individuals who are performing below the set objectives are supported by management to realise their contribution to the overall organisation while growing the individual's career.

The understanding that talent is innate by a number of organisations makes them come up with management actions that result into only considering a few employees in the organisation. The few that are considered are given opportunities to be groomed and motivated so that they can contribute to the organisation effectively. The moment the organisation will realise that talent is not innate, the focus will change and be placed on developing and growing the talent of individuals by focusing on their strength and providing them with the required environment for knowledge acquisition.

Literature reviewed in this study has also shown that there is no evidence that talent is innate, but there is a lot of evidence to the fact that talent is acquired through practice and training of employees in the organisation. It is for this reason that the understanding of what talent is should be reconsidered by most organisations if they want to have the benefit of it.

The research further revealed that talent in the sampled organisations is mainly a two-fold view. The first one is that it has to do with the combination of possessing knowledge and passion for the job that someone has. For example, during the assessment for selection for a particular role, the panel of interviewers assess the potential and the knowledge that an individual possesses at the time he or she is being interviewed. The other issue that is looked at by the interviewers is the attitude and passion of the person towards the responsibilities that are being assigned to them. This is done with the anticipation that the passion will translate into the interest for hunger in knowledge acquisition and application in the assigned responsibilities of the person. In relation to this, the talent in an organisation is looked at as the potential and performance of a person for the period that they have worked.

The understanding and interpretation of the word talent has a lot of implications on managers and employees as well as the society at large. That talent is inborn results in the fixed mindset characterised by believing that performance is based on how smart one is born. Abilities are fixed by intelligence or talents and there is little individuals can do to change that. Dweck found that employees with this mindset will exhibit less persistence, learn less from experience and are more concerned about the reputation and peer comparison. The real issue is that a fixed mindset provides no mechanisms for dealing with setbacks and failure. People will tend to give up rather than risk pursuing challenges which may show flaws in their performance. Managers with this view of the world, find it hard to see the need for development programmes, feedback and coaching. This mindset sees talent as a static trait, driving a talent strategy focused on finding people who are naturally talented and then hiring or retaining them. People with this mindset also believe that performance is based on hard work, experience and learning. It is also

believed that people with this mindset work harder, learn from experience and are willing to take more risks to achieve results. Additionally, this mindset makes people to focus their energies on learning where they had gone wrong than where they performed well. Managers who share this belief about employees will be more inclined to give feedback, provide stretchy assignments and coaching. Talent strategies based on this mindset will look at developing the whole workforce, providing opportunities for job rotation, focusing on the development of skills and encouraging employees to take on stretchy assignments. The moment an organisation applies this mindset, it will definitely change the employee attitude and the talent management programmes will be managed differently in organisations including the society.²²⁵

Understanding of talent also has a lot of implications for an individual, line managers and the organisation at large. This is because the understanding and interpretation will result into different approaches to handling talent management in an organisation. This also brings in the critical questions on whether talent is developed or given; and only to create an environment in which it can flourish. The other question is whether a talent is a personal trait or a capability and if it is bound to specific tasks?

When one understands what talent is, it will be better to manage talent in an organisation. Based on the sampled organisations, it has been shown that the word talent is very dynamic in terms of usage. The most important thing is that whoever is considered to be talented is the person who the organisation thinks, believes in the value system and ethos of that particular organisation. Further, a person is considered to be talented because he or she exhibits outstanding performance and possesses the right attitude at work. Therefore, it would be cardinal to focus on a career conversation with the individuals in an organisation and avoid assigning stretchy objectives for the individuals to be able to over achieve them.

As much as the organisations do not fully understand the meaning of the word talent, the word talent is loosely used by these organisations to mean the employees that have the passion to work for the organisation. In so doing, the management in these organisations come up with different ways of motivating the employees who contribute effectively to the organisation. This has proven to be a motivation factor for individuals. Perhaps what the organisation should also consider is how to motivate the employees in the organisation in order to get the best out of the employees.

²²⁵ Hills J, 2012. Neuroscience and talent: How neuroscience can increase successful execution of talent strategy.

The problem of defining talent has been propagated by a lack of understanding of what talent is and what makes talent. If an organisation believes that talent is innate, that you cannot hire and wire, then the consequences are that an organisation will be focusing on a few people who are believed to be talented. However, if an organisation believes that talent is acquired, then it can identify the strength of an individual and guide them through to maximise the benefits or the potential of each and every individual. The approach of only giving support to a few talented people has failed and will continue to fail if organisations continue to use it. What should be adopted is an inclusive talent support system where a number of individuals will be given adequate support. The focus should be to identify the strength of each and every employee in the organisation and train them so that the results can be achieved. “Biologists often talk about the ecology of an organism; the tallest oak in the forest is not the tallest just because it grew from the hardest soil; it is the tallest because no others blocked its sunlight, the soil around it was deep and rich, no rabbit chewed its bark as a sapling and no lumberjack cut it down before it matured.”²²⁶

When organisations realise that they can develop talent, then they will be able to reduce on the costs incurred by the company which come as a result of unnecessarily hiring candidates from another organisation. Instead, organisations will be able to focus on developing talent within and in the long-run; they will have talent to be able to fit in any of the roles the organisation may want to fill. Hiring from outside comes with a lot of risks such as a learning curve and some of the new employees failing to perform effectively. Therefore, it is imperative that management in these organisations considers taking a risk of developing the talents of their own employees. By taking risks, the organisations will have a ripple effect and employees in those organisations will be prepared to occupy job or roles that come as a result of specific opportunities that rise within the organisation.

Considering talent as innate creates problems for organisations as they become discriminatory by focusing only on the few considered talented and forgetting the bigger picture of growing the company through talent management. Organisations should be looking at talent the same way football team looks at the football players. The training and opportunities are not only provided to a few individual players in the team, but all players receive the same training and exposure for them to deliver the expected results. Otherwise, a team stops being a team when

²²⁶ Davies J, Kourdi J, 2010. The truth about talent: a guide to building a dynamic workforce, realising potential and helping leaders succeed.

only a few are considered to be the best individuals. This may result in other team members being neglected and this culminates into disengagement. Therefore, what organisations should focus on should be is to create the right levels of line managers or supervisors' capabilities to be able to grow the talent within the organisation.

The moment talent is considered as being innate, it eliminates the good initiatives that are soft hygiene factors to grow and develop people's requirement abilities for the expected performance. If an organisation considers talent as innate, the environment is not considered as the contributing factor to grow the required talent in the organisation. It is cardinal that organisations put in place the environment that would be conducive for the development of the required talent. For example, the engagement levels in the organisation should be within the acceptable levels for that talent to flourish and blossom otherwise, all the talented people will be leaving the organisation and going to some other organisations. Thus, it is vital for an organisation to create a conducive environment for talent growth. The conducive environment includes, but not limited to, organisational values, management style, proper reward management, clear grievance procedures and processes, and fairness and accountability. The moment these are put in place, there will be realisation of benefits of talent management.

The talent strategy for most of the sampled organisations has been misaligned and is not linked to organisational strategy. The reason is that there is a lack of understanding of what talent is. If organisations knew what talent is, the actions to align talent strategy to the organisation strategy would be easy. The actions that have been employed to deal with the talent agenda are outdated and this is because the concept of talent has not really been understood.

What organisations provide to the employees for them to perform in an organisation is learning and mainly the learning is through learning from others or job on training based on situations that are encountered and the formal trainings that are provided. What has been revealed about learning is that it confirms that we all just learn based on the things that are conceivable. The idea that learning is an active and creative process is an idea that comes from Plato's Meno, which states that through the learning process, we discover what is already in us. The word can only be known through the pre-existing mental categories.²²⁷ The mental categories are created by learning and through practice. There is nothing like innate talent when it comes to organisational learning. It just depends on the individual's effort, and passion for the job. What measures someone's talent is often the exposure to something and how they deal with the

²²⁷ Carr D, 1998. Education Knowledge and Truth - beyond the postmodern impasse.

situations later. For example, a person who has passed through the engineering field will be more inclined to quickly deal with the problem-solving situations.

Based on the literature review and findings from the selected companies in Zambia, it is obvious and apparent that an environment plays a key role in identifying, growing and managing talent. For example, African football teams perform poorly at the world games in comparison to the other continents. The major reason for this is that the other continents have invested heavily in human resource and infrastructure that helps to grow the football talent. In addition, the sport in other continents is more lucrative hence, it is motivating for players to focus and perform better.

According to Total Sportex, since 1956, there has only been one African player who has won Ballon d'Or and it was George Weah in 1995. A Ballon d'Or award is the highest level of individual award in football and it is awarded to the best player in the world every year. Since 1995, when the award rules were amended to include any person playing in European league there has only been one African player who has won it. George Weah is the only African player who won the Ballon d'Or and there has never been any from the continent. This shows that the sports environment in Europe in terms of infrastructure, human resource and incentives is much more conducive and attractive to grow talent.

This phenomena also applies in the sampled organisations, for talent to grow and for organisations to recognise its contribution, there is need to put up the policies and engagement environment otherwise there can be no talent to be talked about. Therefore, it is very important for managers to understand these environmental factors so that they can be able to manage the organisation well and grow the future leaders of the organisation. In an event that a manager does not recognise and appreciate talent, some of the engaging factors for talent to grow and be productive will be affected and the organisation may be closed down. An engaging environment results in creativity and satisfaction at a place of work.

On the other hand not all the employees in the sampled organisation perform or contribute the same to growth of the organisations. The performance of the employees in organisation is definitely despite the employees receiving the same attention in terms of training and development with the same line managers. It's usually a general rule in organisations just like in schools or universities the performance of employees follows the normal curve distribution. This implies that there are employees who are high performers, moderate performers and poor performers. It is actually one of the indicators that show that talent is innate but there is no

evidence for the notion that talent is innate. The other aspect that shows that talent is innate is the way organisation create talent pools to focus only on the top talent of the organisation. It helps out the organisation because whenever they are looking for the candidates in the industry they target the top performers who can quickly fit in their culture. There is need to explore and understand the phenomena that talent is innate so that even talent management can be applied properly in an organisation. In the end this will help out to enhance Knowledge Management in an organisation.

The talent as innate ability has different outcomes depending on how the culture of the organisation and the change management initiatives that were put in place when introducing talent management. If only a few individuals are considered as talent and focus is placed on them to be considered for any opportunities, it may motivate others to be considered as talented. This will compel certain individuals to put in extra effort so that they can belong to the elite group. On the other hand if the communication has not been done properly this may bring disengagement among the employees and others may not punch above their weight as they can think that it's only for the selected view.

What should be important to the organisation is that whether talent is considered innate or acquired there should be a deliberate policy and effort by management to ensure that everyone is supported. The talent management initiatives should be applied to everyone in the organisation so that others do not feel disadvantaged by not being among the few elite. It will be important for organisations when recruiting to use online or system based talent profiling before a candidate is engaged so that recruiting manager can understand the strengths and development areas of the person. This will help organisation to place employees in the Departments or Units where they can contribute effectively based on their strengths.

5.2 Why do we still do talent management in organisations?

After all is said about talent, the question to ask is “do organisations really need talent management in place?” Additionally, organisations should consider the approach of looking at motivating employees and keeping them engaged in an organisation in order to realise their potential and contribute to the organisation through talent management. If the organisation focuses on the potential in terms of what the employee's strengths are, it will definitely make that organisation achieve a lot more. Some key items to consider in the organisation are; providing the right engagement levels, providing proper reward and recognition programmes or systems, and providing line manager capability programmes to build the leadership and management skills of the people who are managing others, maintaining the industrial harmony

and providing the right platform for knowledge management process to flourish. By doing this, the organisations will amazingly achieve the astronomical results that can move it to the required level of performance.

The reason why this study focused on understanding talent was to investigate whether it is still worth to employ talent management in an organisation. The research has revealed that talent management is worth being implemented, but the only thing that needs to be understood is what the meaning of talent is so that the initiatives are properly applied to the organisation. Without the understanding of what talent is, the organisations' implementation set up is deemed to fail. The word talent management is a combination of characteristics and so applying only certain characteristics of talent management, and leaving out others, will make an organisation not able to get the benefit of what talent management is.

Just as talent management is vital in an organisation, talent acquisition is also another key concept that relates to talent management and which organisations should utilise to help them to prepare for future demands of hiring individuals who will be able to perform effectively. Further, it will be important to still consider talent as important because talent interpretation covers a wide range of characteristics which need to be addressed. For example, the word talent looks at the potential of the individual to be able to perform and discharge his or her responsibilities to the expectation of the organisation. Hence, when an organisation considers talent as a focal point in the organisation, there are a lot of things that will be improved on the employees within that organisation.

The talent management initiatives are interconnected and talent management has to be holistic if productivity of an organisation is to be realised. There are a lot of initiatives like, careers coaching, succession planning, mentoring and job on training. These all look at developing a complete person who will be able to contribute effectively to the growth of an organisation. Therefore, an organisation should be able to consider everyone working in that particular organisation when applying principles of talent management.

The lesson from the findings of this research is that talent is all encompassing and an organisation will have to look at all the spheres to be able to apply effective talent management in an organisation.

With the understanding of what talent is and how it can be developed, it is reasonable to conclude that talent refers to all the employed people within the organisation that may differ in the levels of knowledge, skills, characteristics and ability. This understanding does not focus

on a small group of people within the organisation, but looks at everyone in the organisation with unique abilities to contribute to the growth of the organisation. Talent management is the only system that makes the human resource to be perceived as the unique contributors to the growth of the organisation. With this understanding, talent management helps managers to understand and appreciate all the employees or human resource in the organisation as assets that can contribute to the performance of the organisation.

The researcher strongly believes that the only way the problem of defining talent can be resolved is by understanding what talent is. In the past, it was a challenge to apply talent management because of understanding talent as inherent and only possessed by a few individuals in the organisation. This affects the management action as it only focuses on developing a small group of people and leaving out other employees in the organisation and this demotivates them from contributing to the growth of the organisation. This understanding results in a vicious cycle of everyone going for only those employees who are perceived to be talented without paying attention to the other employees as critical resources in the organisation.

The understanding of talent management fosters team dynamics as it makes managers look at the holistic picture that everyone is a valuable contributor to the team goals unlike focusing only on a small group of people within the same organisation. Understanding talent as an acquired ability makes line managers look at the individuals within the organisation as valuable contributors. In an organisation, it is not only a few who help achieve, but everyone contributes to the betterment of the team and the organisation in general. This applies to any team. For example, in a football team, it is not only a person who scores who brings the glory to the team but it is every individual's effort that helps the team to win. In the same vein, managers need to learn that organisations are a system and the system will only be able to function if all the parts of the system are functioning properly without which the organisation is bound to fail in discharging its duties. Hence, talent management with the holistic outlook is important in managing organisations in modern times.

Understanding talent as an acquired ability or something that an individual will learn comes with a lot of benefits because an organisation considers the needs of all the workers in the organisation as all of them contribute to the growth of the organisation. When there is a deep understanding of what the workforces needs, it makes the organisation productive as there is a general consensus of loyalty from all the employees within the organisation. One of the

examples is the employee wellness programmes, increase in maternity leave, and digital and flexible working hours in a number of organisations. These are some of the initiatives that make organisations be considerate and respond to the needs of the workers in the organisation.

The benefit of talent management is that it makes the HR practitioners proactive and relevant to the organisation as the focus is on identifying the growth opportunities for individuals to increase the organisation's productivity. When talent is understood as a phenomenon that everyone in the organisation possesses and that can be developed, it places HR close to the business or operations units to support the functions in growing the valuable assets of the organisation. The beauty is that everyone in the organisation will feel the impact of the HR practitioners as most of the actions will be people centred unlike process centred. The focus will be more on talent analytics and how individuals are progressing from one stage of the career to the next.

The understanding of talent in today's modern and knowledge economies is very cardinal, especially when it comes to managing the millennial who always want to progress to another level of their career. It is very important to note that in managing millennial, there is need to understand the behavioural patterns and this can only be done with the approach of holistic talent management that can be done with deep appreciation of talent reviews. The needs of the millennial are quite versatile, hence the need to focus on understanding their tests and expectations of the organisation; otherwise, the organisation risks losing those employees to competitor organisations.

This study revealed that talent management has failed to be properly implemented to the satisfaction of the organisations because of a lack of understanding of what talent is. Talent is multifaceted and for it to be developed or to be nurtured, individual competencies and attributes have to be developed. For example, someone may be considered to be talented at an operational job, but if they only possess technical competencies, when they are elevated to an administrative level that requires strategic thinking and leadership competencies, they may fail to perform effectively. The individual considered as a high performer will perform well and lead the team well.

Secondly, the study has revealed that there is a deep understanding of what the initiatives that are part of talent management mean. The indication is that looking at talent management from a holistic view will help organisations meet their talent agenda. Talent cannot be looked at as some one thing that needs to be developed but as a number of things or initiatives that need to

be looked at and below are the initiatives that need to be critically considered in any talent management.

Some of the critical initiatives to consider in talent management are succession planning, performance reward and benefits, training and development, talent acquisition and talent retention. If these are not considered, then the organisation will not be able to realise the required talent that can propel the organisation to higher heights. This shows that there is a connection between the two phenomena and that these are useful to an organisation at large.

5.3 Knowledge Management

Knowledge management helps an organisation to manage talent and it leads to employees contributing effectively and efficiently to an organisation. In using knowledge management, an organisation looks at the infrastructure available such as technological systems that the organisation has as well as the human resources who operate such infrastructure. Vaiman and Vance acknowledge that despite the incredible contribution of knowledge management to the organisations, there are shortcomings that limit its value and utility in proving organisational performance.²²⁸

From the above discussion, it can be argued that talent and knowledge management are interconnected based on talent initiatives and knowledge management models. For example, it has been observed that career planning which is talent management is an effective tool that helps to develop and retain talent in an organisation. According to the schools of thought that propagate for knowledge management, developing and retaining talent is relative to creating and retaining knowledge in an organisation.

All in all organisations needs to understand talent and knowledge and apply the amalgamation of TM and KM for organisations to perform effectively and realise the required profit and efficiency. With the fast-moving technology and scarcity of knowledge, it is imperative for organisations to adopt the Smart Talent Management to enable them to compete effectively on the market. The application of knowledge management and the realisation of the contribution of talent management to an organisation provide the organisation with the required synergy for effective management.

²²⁸ Vance CM, Vaiman V, 2008. Smart talent management: building knowledge assets for competitive advantage

5.4 Recommendations for further research

The study provides a basis for further research and it for this reason that the following areas are being recommended for research to be done:

- To investigate how effective Talent Management is being applied in Zambian organisation.
- The explanation that talent is innate is not sufficient therefore a research can be undertaken to further understand and possibly provide evidence for the notion that talent is innate.
- Further research can be conducted to understand a direct link of talent management to performance of Zambian organisations.
- A research can be conducted to understand the correlation of talent management and employee engagement.
- To conduct a research on the relationship between organisation culture and Knowledge Management.

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