

Exploring Talent Management Practices in a Selected Gauteng Metropolitan Municipality

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Abstract

The Constitution of South Africa requires local government institutions to provide essential services for the greater good of society. It is widely believed that talented employees are the most important assets for ensuring service efficiency in local government. Therefore, investing in talented employees is essential to ensure continuous service performance. The primary objective of this study was to explore the current application of talent management practices in a South African local government institution. A qualitative research methodology was implemented using semi-structured interviews (N=8) with personnel of a particular local government institution. The strategic importance of talent management, talent performance management, and talent acquisition were identified as constraining factors for talent management implementation. Training and development and retention strategies were identified as enabling factors. Overall, the findings indicated that talent management needs to be addressed in the local government institution, hindering efficient service delivery. Local government institutions are urged to take note of the findings that talent management is essential for improving service delivery. Recommendations are made.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Local government institutions are crucial in providing the services necessary for the well-being and survival of a country's population (Ndevu & Muller, 2018). Local government institutions, also known as municipalities, have the primary responsibility of providing essential services to South African citizens, including water and sanitation, proper physical infrastructure such as electricity and roads, and public transport (South Africa, 1996). However, a recent analysis published by the Development Bank of Southern Africa in 2023 emphasises the ongoing difficulties faced by South African municipalities, which hinder the country's economic progress and impede community development. According to the South African Constitution, the local government is obligated to develop the necessary skills and resources to fulfill its responsibilities. This highlights the urgent need for highly skilled individuals to deliver the requisite services (Mvuyana et al., 2021). Shava and Doorgapersad (2022) underscore the significance of formulating talent management policies for local municipalities to attract, oversee, and retain specialised talent groups that can contribute to socio-economic progress in the digital age.

The primary aim of this study was to investigate talent management strategies employed in a specific local government institution located in the Gauteng Region of South Africa. Existing research indicates that talent management in local government organisations has not yet reached its maximum effectiveness (Ntaopane & Vermeulen, 2018). Barkhuizen and Masale (2022) discovered that all talent management practices had a subpar to average level of effectiveness. Factors such as a lack of dedication from management towards talent management (Maboep, 2018), ineffective performance management (Koketso, 2011), insufficient investment in talent development (Dlamini & Nzimakwe, 2021), ineffective retention strategies (Mahlahla, 2018), and inadequate succession planning (Le Roes, 2017) all contribute to subpar talent management practices. Phago (2015) identifies a key obstacle in talent management techniques within the public sector: the presence of unqualified officials occupying particular positions. Consequently, the implementation of talent management in the public sector is typically characterised by inconsistency, which can lead to subpar service provision, frequent turnover of employees with specialised skills, and low employee morale. Dlamini and Nzimakwe (2021) argue that there is a significant requirement for the use of talent management strategies to improve the recruitment and retention of talented individuals in local government organisations. Additionally, the efficiency of service delivery in local government institutions is impeded by a significant shortage of skilled personnel (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2022). Investing in talent management practices is crucial since talented persons are well recognised

for their positive impact on the service performance of local government institutions (Mamburu, 2020; Mvuyana, Biyela & Ndlovu, 2021).

1.2. Problem Statement

Talent management has the capacity to enhance the achievement and prosperity of any local government entity. However, it seems that the concept of talent management is being overlooked, resulting in negative implications for people, local government institutions, and society. The local government entities currently under examination are not fulfilling their primary responsibilities, particularly in rural areas where the provision of essential sanitation and water services is being neglected. This results in significant community discontent and public turmoil, and in more severe cases, it can even lead to life-threatening situations. There is a need to investigate talent management in local government institutions to ensure that service performance is accomplished and sustained through skilled individuals.

1.3. Research objectives

The main objective of this research was to explore talent management practices in a selected local government institution in the Gauteng Region of South Africa.

More specifically this research aimed to determine:

- The current state of talent management in a selected government institution;
- The constraining factors for talent management in the selected government institution;
- The enabling factors for talent management in the selected government institution.

In what follows next the literature review for the paper is presented. This is followed by the research design adopted for the study. Thereafter the research findings are presented with a discussion thereof. The paper concludes with management implications and recommendations for future research and practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Defining Talent Management

Talent management is a strategic approach within an organisation that prioritises the well-being of individuals, enhances competitive advantage, and seamlessly incorporates a comprehensive set of advanced, technology-driven, and evidence-based human resource management policies and practices

through a strategic partnership with the HR department (Ahmad, Ma'aji, & Mahmood, 2015). Talent management, as defined by Lee (2018), is the process of identifying, developing, engaging/retaining, and deploying workers who possess exceptional value to an organisation. According to the SA Board of People Practices (2016, p. 2), talent management is defined as the proactive strategy and implementation of an integrated talent-driven organisational strategy. This strategy aims to attract, deploy, develop, retain, and optimise the appropriate talent as identified in the workforce plan, with the goal of ensuring a sustainable organisation. Talent management, when examined holistically, may be seen as a strategic process that utilises a range of integrated approaches to direct talented persons towards the attainment of strategic organisational goals.

2.2. Strategic importance of talent management

Van Zyl et al. (2017) argue that organisations must possess the capacity to implement a comprehensive personnel management plan that aligns with the overall business strategy. This alignment enables the firm to achieve good performance in the market. Mittar and Dastidar (2018) found that implementing talent management not only generates a positive return on investment for the company but also enhances employee motivation and performance in job execution. This is one of the reasons that clearly illustrates the undeniable importance of talent management for organisations, as it has evolved into a highly strategic endeavour. Alsafadi and Altahat (2021) support this by asserting that effective implementation of talent management methods can enhance an organization's ability to accomplish its objectives. Therefore, the key to achieving successful service delivery is to effectively integrate and align personnel management with the organisational strategy (Luna-Arocas and Lara, 2020). Furthermore, firms that possess superior talent management procedures are better equipped to adjust and take advantage of novel prospects (Filippus & Schultz, 2019).

2.3. Talent management practices

The primary focus of talent management operations is to develop strategies that effectively interact with crucial talent within the company, to gain a competitive advantage (Gamama, et al., 2018). In the context of the public sector, a competitive advantage refers to the capacity to provide services effectively. An examination of the existing literature reveals a lack of agreement over the specific elements that constitute talent management techniques. Rabbi et al. (2015) proposed three key elements of talent management: talent acquisition, talent retention, and talent development. Šiaučiūnaitė and Vizgirdaitė (2015) present a comprehensive inventory of practices including recruitment, onboarding, skills enhancement, performance evaluation, succession planning, employee retention tactics, employee engagement, and off-boarding. Organisations that recognise and value the requirements of their employees can develop effective talent management strategies (Poisat et al., 2018). This study will specifically examine talent management techniques, including recruiting,

performance management, training and development, and retention. We disaggregate the specified talent management practices.

Recruitment: Chungyalpa and Karishma (2015) argue that the process of finding and choosing talented individuals is crucial due to the increasing competition for skilled workers and the growing need for individuals with the appropriate qualifications for specific positions. Rozario et al. (2019) stated that in today's competitive economy, companies must prioritise their recruitment and selection processes to get a competitive advantage. This illustrates that both public and private companies are acknowledging the crucial importance of recruiting and selecting high-performing individuals for the long-term viability and prosperity of the firm. As stated by Malini (2020), the organisation is facing challenges in acquiring talent due to the scarcity of skilled individuals in the job market. The extensive body of literature refers to the difficulties associated with recruiting skilled staff for local government agencies. Several significant factors contributing to the issue include a deficiency in talent acquisition strategies (Shingenge & Saurombe, 2022), insufficient employee value propositions (Theys, 2023), a weak ethical talent management culture (Barkhuizen et al., 2022), a subpar leadership talent mindset (Barkhuizen & Masale, 2022), and a lack of comprehension regarding the indicators of talent acquisition in local government (Dwiputrianti, Sutiyono, Suryanto, Rachmawati & Purba, 2023). Organisations that do not prioritise recruiting and selection as a strategic necessity will be unable to accomplish their objectives (Adebola & Banjo, 2017).

Performance Management: Performance management is a set of operations that aims to identify, assess, and enhance the performance of individuals or teams inside the organisation (Gorman et al., 2017). Moulin (2017) states that public sector institutions worldwide are facing challenges in providing satisfactory service, leading to dissatisfaction among public service customers and key stakeholders due to higher expenses. Gerrish (2015) argues that inadequate leadership in the public sector is characterised by a narrow emphasis on performance outcomes rather than effectively managing and enhancing performance. Research conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa has demonstrated a clear correlation between the implementation of talent management strategies and the overall performance of personnel working in local government (Magolego, 2013; Masale, 2014). Furthermore, performance management continually appears to be one of the least effective personnel management techniques in local government organisations (Barkhuizen & Masale, 2022). Employees express discontentment due to the absence of clear performance objectives, negative performance evaluation encounters, and a lack of acknowledgement. Research conducted by Oupa (2023) revealed that the South African municipality's inadequate service delivery was attributed to unrealistic performance.

Training and Development: Aderibigbe and Dunmade (2019) state that training and development help employees acquire the necessary abilities to improve their performance in their current role and acquire new talents to advance to higher-level positions in the future. Mohd et al. (2019) concur that businesses should allocate resources toward enhancing their human capital through training and development initiatives. This investment aims to elevate the skill levels of employees, enhance their performance, foster motivation, and contribute to the achievement of organisational objectives. According to Yaqoot et al. (2017), training and development are crucial for an organization's survival in a competitive environment. This is because they enhance the organization's human capital by equipping it with the necessary skills and abilities to prosper. Khan et al. (2017) found that training and development not only enhance employees' skills and competences, but also foster positive attitudes, leading to increased efficiency, better health, and higher productivity.

According to Hammond and Churchill (2018), managers and supervisors must prioritise investing in human resources by implementing training and development programs. This is crucial because enhancing the quality of employees directly impacts the long-term viability and profitability of the organisation. According to Du Plessis (2016:36), in the context of local government, it is crucial that workforce planning and training and development are included in the strategic planning process when engaging in the Integrated Development Plan as outlined in the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000). Training and development are overlooked in local government institutions, resulting in personnel lacking adequate opportunities to network and engage in activities that would boost their career development (Magolego, 2013; Masale, 2014; Barkhuizen & Masale, 2022).

Retention: Rakhra (2018) defines retention as the capacity of an institution to maintain employees in its employment. Rombaut and Guerry (2019) highlight the importance of preventing the departure of highly skilled workers from the business. Kaur (2017) states that using retention techniques can facilitate effective communication between firms and their employees, ultimately leading to increased staff commitment and support for corporate initiatives. In addition, the departure of crucial individuals poses a threat to the long-term viability of organisations and can lead to financial setbacks (Tadesse, 2022). Mathimaran and Kumar (2017) argue that the provision of recognition, rewards, and respect is crucial for the long-term retention of employees. Research has shown that talent management is a reliable indicator of local government employees' intentions to leave their jobs voluntarily (Magolego, 2013; Mpofu, 2013; Barkhuizen et al., 2022). The aforementioned studies also indicated that talent retention methods are the most overlooked practices in personnel management. Most local

government institutions lack a talent retention plan, resulting in management failing to engage in talent retention discussions with their personnel.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research methodology. Bryman and Bell (2014:31) argue that qualitative research places greater emphasis on the inductive approach to theory and study, recognising that social reality is subject to constant interpretation by individuals. According to Hammarberg et al. (2016), qualitative research is appropriate for gathering information to address a research topic and obtain insights into opinions, attitudes, beliefs, or preferences. Qualitative research mostly focusses on investigating the subjective human experiences related to a certain matter that individuals often interact with or encounter. This research study is conducted under the phenomenological research paradigm, a qualitative research approach that aims to gather data on an individual's subjective experiences within their social and cultural context (Neubauer, 2019:90). The research employed a case study methodology. A case study, as a qualitative methodology, involves the investigation of a phenomena that is limited to a certain time and place (Kristine & Evans, 2019:2).

3.2. Research procedure

The researchers gained authorisation from the Gauteng metropolitan municipality's knowledge management department, which is responsible for granting permission and ensuring ethical clearance. After the proposal was approved, a contract was established with the Gauteng metropolitan municipality to conduct the mentioned study. The designated population was contacted to arrange interviews via a gatekeeper. The study's objective was elucidated to the participants, along with a clear delineation of their entitlements. The study gained ethical clearance from Southern Business School. The research strictly followed all ethical guidelines for the study, ensuring anonymity and secrecy.

3.3. Research procedure

The unit of analysis consisted of two members of the line Management, Human Resources Officers and at least six (6) professionals within the Gauteng metropolitan municipality. All eight (8) participants gave an account of their lived experiences as far as talent management practice is concerned. A description of the sample is presented below.

Table 1*Sample descriptives*

Department	Participant Number	Gender	Race	Job Designation	Highest qualification	Years of Experience in the municipality
Knowledge Management	Participant 1	Female	African	Knowledge Management Specialist	Post Grad Dip in Knowledge Management	11 years
HR Department	Participant 2	Female	African	HR Officer	BTech HRM	8 years
Customer Services Department	Participant 3	Female	African	Assistant Director	BA Psychology	9 years
HR Department	Participant 4	Female	African	HR Specialist	MBL	5 years
Electricity Division	Participant 5	Male	African	Foreman	N5 Cert Engineering, Trade Certificate	9 years
Infrastructure and Human Settlement	Participant 6	Male	African	Operations Manager: Housing	BA admin Hons	14 years
HR Department	Participant 7	Male	Coloured	HR Officer	Diploma HRM	6 years
Electricity Division	Participant 8	Male	African	Technician	N3 Certificate, Trade Certificate	14 years

Source: Own compilation

3.4. Data collection methods and recording

Data collection for this study involved the use of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews, as described by Bryman and Bell (2014), involve a predetermined set of questions on a particular subject, known as the interview guide. However, the interviewee has flexibility in how they choose to answer these questions. Datko (2015:143) states that the primary goal of semi-structured interviews is to elicit the respondent's subjective answer regarding a familiar circumstance related to their personal experiences. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019:5) emphasise the significance of the interviewer establishing a connection with the interviewee through active and respectful listening to the information provided by the interviewee.

3.5. Recording of the data

During the data-collecting process, an audio recording was utilised, and written notes were made to capture the specific keywords employed by each participant. Data transcription was employed after

the completion of the audio recordings of the interviews. The records were securely preserved due to their significance in enabling academics to analyse and comprehend some replies that may have been unclear in the past. The transcribed reports were given back to the participants for the purpose of confirming their accuracy.

3.6. Data analyses

Borden (2014) identifies various methodologies for qualitative data analysis, such as content analysis, thematic analysis, grounded theory, narrative analysis, conversation analysis, and discourse analysis. Content analysis was utilised to examine and understand the data that had been obtained. Content analysis is a method used to examine written or spoken material to identify and understand recurring themes. Its main feature is the structured process of categorising and interpreting meaning, ultimately providing a detailed description of the data (Vaismoradi et al., 2016:100). Bryman and Bell (2014:301) argue that in content analysis, researchers should use coding to categorise occurrences of interest based on certain subjects and themes.

4. Results and Findings

The data analyses resulted in five underlying themes, namely Strategic importance of talent management (mentioned 33 times), Performance management (mentioned 15 times), Talent acquisition (mentioned 9 times), Talent development (mentioned 8 times), and Talent retention (mentioned 8 times). The themes and sub-themes are presented in Table 2 and discussed in the section below.

Table 2

Themes and sub-themes

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency	Total
Strategic Importance of Talent Management	Service Delivery	20	33
	Policies (related to talent management)	13	
Performance Management	Recognition and Incentives	7	15
	Performance Appraisals	7	
Talent Acquisition	Recruitment strategies	9	9
Talent Development	Training & Development strategies	6	8
	Apprentice/Artisanship	2	

Talent Retention	Technical skills	4	6
	Retention Strategies	2	

Source: Own compilation

4.1 Theme 1: Strategic importance of talent management

Combined, the theme strategic importance of talent management emerged the most. Two sub-themes were further identified which included service delivery and talent management policies.

4.1.1 Sub-theme: Service Delivery and Talent Management

The participants recognised the significance and strategic nature of talent management in enhancing service performance within local government entities. Additional observations made by the participants encompassed the concepts of equity and openness in the application of talent management practices, the synchronisation of talent management techniques to enhance service delivery, and the repercussions of inadequate talent management.

Some of the comments that support that are as follows,

“Definitely so, when people are happy, they will do their work to the very best of their abilities. Our employees in the human settlement department work hard and they have an impact on the service delivery of houses in this municipality. Amongst others, they play a key role in managing processes of contract management, processing applications, allocation of house and monitoring and evaluation of the projects from the beginning through to the end.” (Participant 6, Male, Middle Manager, Operational Manager: Housing, African).

Furthermore:

“I think a lot needs to be done because the way we implement talent management practices is not transparent and of course it may very good but at this stage, I doubt if talent management processes are aligned to service delivery. Perhaps we need to tighten processes and ensure we look at the best practices of talent management in order to improve success.” (Participant 7, Male, Professional, HR Officer, Coloured).

And:

“The municipality must recognise its employees especially those that are working on the cold face of service delivery not only managers who sit in offices. The people who make

the municipality to deliver service must be looked after. There should be wellness programmes, people must be trained and promoted” (Participant 8, Male, Professional, Electrical Technician, African).

Management and professionals emphasised that talent management is a crucial factor of the municipality, particularly in relation to service delivery. All of them stressed that the effective execution of talent management will result in enhanced service delivery in the Gauteng metropolitan municipality. Several statements can be used to substantiate this claim:

“Talent management has an impact on service delivery, for instance, if employees are treated poorly and they embark on strike for a long time, service delivery will be affected. For example, when the Reya Vaya bus drivers’ strike, is service delivery not affected? It is.”(Participant 1, Female, Senior Professional, Knowledge Management Specialist, African).

Furthermore:

“Either way talent management practices if applied in a good way it will yield good results and if badly applied will result in bad results. If we had been applying talent management to the latter, we would be the best in service delivery. We are obviously doing our best as the city but there is always room for improvement.” (Participant 3, Female, Middle Manager, Assistant Director Customer Service, African).

And:

“I think a lot needs to be done because the way we implement talent management practices is not transparent and of course it may very good but at this stage, I doubt if talent management processes are aligned to service delivery. Perhaps we need to tighten processes and ensure we look at the best practices of talent management in order to improve success.” (Participant 7, Male, Professional, HR Officer, Coloured).

4.1.2 Sub-theme: Policies

Policies were identified as an additional topic of debate. The participants expressed concern about the significant risk associated with not implementing talent management due to the management's failure to implement the municipality's regulations. Participants believed that there were adequate policies in

place to support the adoption of talent management, but careful execution was not occurring. Here are some of the responses:

“You know, there are policies in the municipality and they are many but the problem is how we understand them as individuals. I think we must take them serious and see how best we can implement these policies.” (Participant 3, Female, Middle Manager, Assistant Director Customer Care Service, African).

Furthermore:

“From a policy point of view there are some fair guidelines however, line management has the tendency of making unitary decisions that go against policy. Things would be easier if management knew policy and interpreted it correctly and the fact that there has been instability in the municipality that has worsened things in the City.” (Participant 4, Female, Professional, HR Specialist, African).

And:

“All I can say is that we have policies that we rely on that helps in the management of talent in the municipality. We do everything to the best of our abilities to adhere to those policies. So the policies provide, in particular, HR Policies provide guidelines in the management of talent.” (Participant 6, Male, Middle Manager, Operational Manager: Housing, African).

4.2 Theme 2: Performance Management

Combined performance management was the second most important theme that emerged. Specific areas of focus included the topics of acknowledgement and rewards, as well as evaluations of performance. The panellists emphasised the need of performance management in facilitating efficient service delivery.

4.2.1 Sub-theme: Recognition and Incentives

The experienced workers and professionals suggested that management should acknowledge diligent personnel to motivate them to maintain their hard work and give exceptional service. Here are the remarks provided by the participants.

“I think for me there should be a way of recognising people that are working hard in the City, yes there are bonuses and overtime for field workers but recognition is important, not just money only. One of the things that people complain about is the lack of career progression. So, I think a part of the talent management plan should look at how our employees can progress in their chosen careers.” (Participant 3, Female, Middle Manager, Assistant Director Customer Service, African).

Furthermore:

“The municipality must recognise its employees especially those that are working on the cold face of service delivery not only managers who sit in offices. The people who make the municipality to deliver service must be looked after. There should be wellness programmes, people must be trained and promoted.” (Participant 8, Male, Professional, Electrical Technician, African).

And:

“I think there should be incentives for our people because we work so hard even at night when people are sleeping. The electricity department is so important because if it does not do it work everybody is able to see that work is not because there won't be electricity so those who keep the lights burning must be paid better than those in the offices.” (Participant 5, Male, Junior Manager, Foreman Electricity, African).

4.2.2. Sub-theme: Performance Appraisals

There is a general sentiment among the professionals and some in management that performance management can be improved. The existing approach is lacking integration, and it is necessary to introduce a culture of professionalism to address the negative impact of politics on employee morale in the Gauteng metropolitan municipality. Here are a few statements provided by the participants:

“Generally, performance management has an impact on the talent management in the sense that one is able to gage how the organisational talent has been performing, however in the case of the municipality even though we have policies I don't think that we have thoroughly implemented performance management, I think we can do better than

currently, we are doing.” (Participant 1, Female, Senior Professional, Knowledge Management Specialist, African).

Furthermore:

“There is no impact because performance management has not been done for quite some time, so we come and work and go home. At least some of us, we still have bosses who still encourage us but there is no formalised way of doing performance management.” (Participant 2, Female, Professional, HR Officer, African).

Participant 3 further supported this by saying:

“Performance management in the recent years is not managed like it used to be. In the past, it required that employees enter into a contract but now it seems s as if is up to the departments to enter into these contracts now people are no longer paid even if they perform highly. They don’t get the bonuses. So, performance management must be looked at and revised.” (Participant 3, Female, Middle Manager, Assistant Director Customer Service, African).

And lastly:

“Performance management is very important to understand whether or not we are delivering on what is expected of us and when all of us do what we are supposed to do, the municipality is able to deliver service.” (Participant 8, Male, Professional, Electrical Technician, African).

4.3 Theme 3: Talent Acquisition

Talent Acquisition has emerged as the third most prominent theme. The interviewees concurred that the municipality has a significant opportunity to enhance talent acquisition and should consider adopting best practices for recruiting people who are well-suited for the job. The sub-theme of recruitment strategies emerged.

4.3.1 Sub-theme: Recruitment Strategies

The interviewees express apprehensions over the recruitment methodologies employed by the municipality. Some participants believe that recruitment processes, particularly at the strategic level, lack transparency. Here are a few comments:

“As you said that recruitment is part of the talent management. If management does not follow the policies of the municipality, they will hire the wrong person in the municipality and that will have adverse consequences on the entire city because the wrong people are hired.” (Participant 1, Female, Senior Professional, Knowledge Management Specialist, African).

Furthermore:

“It is very important because recruitment plays an important role in getting the right talent in the organisation especially if it did not interfere with. Sometimes people don’t understand that things like recruiting processes have been designed in such a way that if followed properly, they can produce the best result as far as getting the right people for the organisation. But sometimes some people who are political want to interfere. I guess we must be patient maybe things will be okay.” (Participant 2, Female, Professional, HR Officer, African).

And:

“Because of the inconsistencies in policy implementation, it makes it very difficult for talent management to have an impact on recruitment processes in the municipality.” (Participant 4, Female, Professional, HR Specialist, African).

4.4 Theme 4: Talent Development

The theme of Talent Development also emerged. Supervisors emphasised that training and development are crucial aspects of talent management in any business. The participants also expressed that for the municipality to enhance service delivery, training and development must be approached in a methodical manner. The derived sub-themes from this overarching theme include training and development strategies, as well as apprenticeship or artisanship.

4.4.1 Sub-theme: Training and Development Strategies

The sub-topic of training and development initiatives was found under the broader issue of talent development. The management stressed the importance of training and development in enhancing the employees' skills to positively influence the level of service delivery. Here are the comments:

“Different structures within the municipality administer their training and development interventions and HR’s roles is to advise on the policy and facilitate the process, however in some instances, employees get trained and they come back and just to continue to do what they have always been doing without applying what they have trained on and therefore that does not necessarily impact on their performance and in some other instance depending on the structure, management also insists that employees implement their training and may have an impact on their performance, but you see that is not a universal approach in the organisation.” (Participant 4, Female, Professional, HR Specialist, African).

Furthermore:

“From time to time our employees go on training and development intervention and that helps to increase the competency of our staff so that they can work more efficiently and effectively.” (Participant 6, Male, Middle Manager, Operational Manager: Housing, African).

And:

“Yes, to some extent, I think that training and development are undertaken and employees do go on training, however, we need to be able to measure the impact of those training interventions. Our staff should not go to training workshops for the sake of ticking a box. They must go there and come back improved and better so that even the way they do their jobs become and improves service delivery in our metro.” (Participant 7, Male, Professional, HR Officer, Coloured).

4.4.2 Sub-theme: Apprentice/Artisanship

Apprentice and/or Artisanship have been identified as two sub-themes within the talent development category. This is significant since this form of talent development is vital in terms of service delivery. The following text contains comments.

“In the case of artisans and technicians, we go through an apprenticeship and yearly refresher courses and that is very important because it helps us to be focused and learn productive ways of doing our work. Therefore, training is very important and it helps to boost the morale of the people.” (Participant 8, Male, Professional, Electrical Technician, African).

And lastly:

I do a lot of things which include conducting tests and assessments of new systems, electrical repairs assemble electrical panels and install them, I do trouble shooting on the system, I prepare reports on installations, maintenance and infrastructure and also, I supervise and mentor artisans and students who come to do practical or what we call artisanship (Participant 8, Male, Professional, Electrical Technician, African).

4.5 Theme 5: Talent Retention

The findings indicated that the participants recognise the need of retaining skilled people. However, due to challenging external market conditions, it becomes increasingly challenging to keep some talented individuals. Sub-themes that arose were technical skills and retention tactics.

4.5.1 Sub-theme: Technical Skills

Management emphasised the utmost importance of retaining personnel with technical expertise within the municipality. Here are some of the comments.

“Even on that one, we could do better because we have lost a couple of people over the years especially people with technical skills and those skills are so vital in service delivery.” (Participant 1, Female, Senior Professional, Knowledge Management Specialist, African).

Furthermore:

“Even on that one, we could do better because we have lost a couple of people over the years especially people with technical skills and those skills are so vital in service delivery.” (Participant 2, Female, Professional, HR Officer, African).

And lastly:

Recruitment of the right people is important especially in the technical field such as the one I am in. the City does its best to employ the suitably qualifies people in this area and hence we also hire trainee artisans who end becoming artisans or technicians. In that

regard, I believe the city is doing good in recruiting the right employees (Participant 8, Male, Professional, Electrical Technician, African).

4.5.2 Sub-theme: Retention Strategies

Participants expressed the belief that it is necessary to strengthen retention tactics within the Gauteng metropolitan municipality to prevent the loss of skilled individuals to the external labour market. Here are the comments.

“Retention of employees is such a challenge a lot of good people are usually targeted by companies outside and now is much better with covid19 we haven’t had a lot of people leaving.” (Participant 3, Female, Middle Manager, Assistant Director Customer Service, African).

And:

“The Municipality has been losing employees with specialised skills such as ICT, business analyst and even engineers, but may be generally those professions have a high mobility but at the same time we need to tighten our retention strategies so that we don’t lose people at a high rate.” (Participant 7, Male, Professional, HR Officer, Coloured).

5. Discussion

The main objective of this research was to explore the application of talent management practices in a selected Gauteng Metropolitan Municipality. Specifically, we investigated the characteristics that limit and facilitate talent management. The research revealed five fundamental themes: the strategic significance of talent management, talent performance management, talent acquisition, talent development, and talent retention. The latter two themes were identified as factors that empower local government people, while the strategic significance of talent management, talent performance management, and talent recruitment were identified as factors that pose limitations. The subsequent section provides a discussion of the research findings.

The predominant theme that emerged was the strategic significance of talent management in local government entities. The data clearly indicate that participants understand the correlation between talent management and its impact on service quality. It is evident that the better the implementation of talent management programs, the higher the quality of service. Several participants expressed that the effective implementation of talent management practices leads to high-quality service delivery,

whereas the opposite scenario has a negative impact on the outcomes. Nevertheless, most participants emphasised the lack of coordination between talent management and service delivery in the specified department. Phago (2015) asserts that personnel management is crucial in order to prevent any disruptions in service delivery. Furthermore, when talent management is effectively executed, it empowers the organisation to achieve its objectives and procedures (Alsafadi & Altahat, 2021).

The attendees discussed the municipality's lack of enthusiasm in implementing talent management policies, which resulted in inadequate talent management practices. Several participants noted that talent management practices would be more reliable if management possessed a comprehensive understanding and accurately read policies. Hence, the development and execution of talent management policies play a vital role in the municipality's achievement of its objective (see to Shava & Doorgapersad, 2022).

The research has identified that performance management is an essential element that connects talent management with service delivery. Participants expressed the view that management's implementation of performance management is characterised by a lack of strictness or precision. Consequently, if employees' performance is not evaluated or measured, it would be difficult to judge the performance of the municipality. Consequently, there would be little motivation for those who demonstrate outstanding performance. The findings indicate that performance management in local government is still insufficient (Koketso, 2011). Furthermore, it is imperative to engage in talent management to enhance the service performance of local government institutions (Mamburu, 2020; Mvuyana, Biyela, & Ndlovu, 2020). In addition, it is crucial to provide sufficient acknowledgment and incentives to retain employees (Mathimaran & Kumar, 2017).

The outcomes of this study also uncovered participant apprehensions regarding the recruitment methods of the local municipality. The primary issues that emerged were a lack of transparency in filling strategic posts and a widespread disrespect for recruitment procedures. Consequently, the recruitment of unsuitable candidates adversely affects the performance of institutions. In a labour market marked by an ongoing competition for skilled individuals, it is crucial to execute efficient recruitment methods (Rozario et al., 2019). Adebola and Banjo (2017) argue that businesses that do not see recruiting and selection as a strategic necessity would not be able to accomplish their main goals. Hence, it is imperative to foster a talent management ecosystem that enhances the recruitment and retention of skilled individuals in local government organisations (Dlamini & Nzimakwe, 2021).

Training and development have become essential for enhancing the capacity to deliver services. Despite being exposed to training interventions, employees are often not authorised to utilise the learnt abilities in their work. Training programmes seem to serve only as a means of meeting

regulatory requirements, while their effectiveness in improving services cannot be quantified. Moreover, training and development efforts may not consistently match the skill requirements of municipalities. For example, there is a need for additional apprenticeships to address the shortage of technical skills necessary for efficient municipal service delivery. Yaqoot et al. (2017) argue that a company's ability to thrive is contingent upon equipping its personnel with the essential abilities. The citation "(Mohd et al., 2019)" refers to a publication by Mohd and colleagues in the year 2019. Training and development should be focused and orientated on the skill levels necessary for a company to achieve its goals.

Finally, the findings clearly indicated that participants considered the preservation of technical and ICT skills to be crucial for ensuring the continuity of service. Hence, it is imperative to implement talent retention tactics, especially in the post-Covid-19 work landscape. According to Filippus and Schultz (2019), organisations that have excellent talent management practices will be more capable of adapting and taking advantage of opportunities, which will help them retain staff to support the integrated plan for municipalities (Du Plessis, 2016).

6. Managerial Implications

The research findings have significant management implications. Local government institutions should acknowledge the significance of talent management in promoting sustainable service delivery. Consequently, it is crucial to successfully execute transparent talent management techniques. The findings underscore the necessity of implementing a performance management system that effectively acknowledges and incentivises outstanding performance. Furthermore, the participants highlighted the need for talent acquisition practices to secure highly skilled personnel who can effectively contribute to service delivery. While participants acknowledged the existence of training and development opportunities, it is imperative for management to establish a workplace culture that enables employees to effectively apply their newly acquired abilities. Employee retention tactics are essential for ensuring the ongoing operation of a business. In order to ensure the efficiency of services, management can allocate resources towards implementing policies that aim to retain the necessary expertise inside local government organisations.

7. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

There were certain limitations in this research. The sample only consisted of individuals from a single designated municipality. Consequently, the results cannot be extrapolated to other local governments. Future research can be extended to incorporate additional municipalities to have a comprehensive understanding of talent management in other parts of South Africa. The sample can be extended to

encompass a more comprehensive representation of all the operational domains in municipalities, with the aim of formulating an integrated talent management strategy that is in harmony with the strategic objectives of these institutions. Longitudinal studies can be conducted to track the implementation of people management methods over extended durations.

To summarise, this study emphasises the significance of talent management strategies in driving the efficient service performance of local government organisations. While there are obstacles in comprehending the strategic significance of talent management, performance management, and talent acquisition efficiency, there is evidence indicating the availability of policies and strategies to execute talent management. Hence, it is imperative for management and talent management practitioners to work together in creating comprehensive and unified talent management strategies that may enhance the service performance of local government in all sectors of society.

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