

Talent Management: The Idealistic Realism in Higher Education

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Abstract

The introduction of talent management as a workplace function in the late 1990s was enthusiastically received as an innovative approach to optimise people management practice. Advocates view talent management as a top strategy for ensuring competitiveness, sustainability, and advancement in a VUCA world. Organizations that comprehended and were frontrunners in talent management practices reaped the advantages, although they were in the minority. Regrettably, we are experiencing a period characterised by the "Quiets", referring to Quiet quitting and firing. This has brought attention to the practical implementation of talent management in the workplace and its significance. The main objective of this paper is to deconstruct the ideologies around talent management and the perceived effectiveness of the practical application thereof in the context of higher education. Based on a textual and discourse analysis of foundational texts on TM, I identify the ideological thoughts currently shaping talent management practice and the emergent gaps in the realistic application thereof. Although there have been some advancements in the academic research and practical implementation of talent, notable disparities exist between their perceived benefits and their actual use in the workplace. This necessitates a fundamental change in our ideological cognitive processes regarding talent management.

1. Introduction

To know, is to know that you know nothing. That is the meaning of true knowledge.

(Socrates)

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1.1. Background

1.1.1. Introduction to Realism in Higher Education: What we know

Over the last two decades, the talent management field has grown significantly, emphasizing addressing crucial knowledge gaps and implementing best practices in various sectors, including higher education. The initial need for clarity in coining the concept of workplace talent was addressed by offering an integrated, unified, and multidisciplinary definition of talent. Barkhuizen (2022) defines workplace talent as individuals with talent intelligence acumen who can contribute to an organization's long-term competitiveness (in this case, higher education). This approach offers a broader view of the talent value chain, allowing talented individuals to make strategic contributions to higher education institutions (Jena & Ghadge, 2021).

Secondly, the emphasis moved to practices that optimise talent in the workplace. Initially, talent management used a relatively narrow strategy, focusing on attracting, developing, and retaining talent (Barkhuizen & Gumede, 2021). The realisation that talented individuals are critical to performance and competitiveness necessitated an extension of a more integrated approach to talent management (Kontoghiorghes & Frangou, 2016). This resulted in the creation of talent career life cycles (Barkhuizen & Schutte, 2016) and talent value proposition frameworks (Saurombe & Barkhuizen, 2020) encompassing the entire talent management process from beginning to end. Concurrently, the pressure points between inclusive (i.e., talent management for all) and exclusive (i.e., talent management for only a select few) methods of talent management persist, with the latter remaining preferred in higher education (Nijs, Meyers, & van Woerkom, 2024).

Next, several studies investigated the interrelationships between antecedent, intervening, and outcome variables in the talent management relationship. Lesenyeho, Barkhuizen, and Schutte (2018) discovered that management commitment is critical for recruiting, developing, and retaining early-career academics in South African higher education institutions. Saurombe and Barkhuizen's (2022) research found that talent management practices can increase academic staff happiness and meaning. Theron (2020) found that management support and compensation impacted academic satisfaction with general institutional practices, institutional financing opportunities, diversity management, and community service. Other outcome variables for talent management at Southern African higher education institutions included organisational commitment (Lesenyeho et al., 2018), motivation (Mogwere, 2015), service performance (Barkhuizen, Schutte, & Smit, 2018), and dispositional employability (Roodt, 2013). Overall, the findings indicate that how talent management strategies are implemented in higher education improves or degrades individual and institutional outcomes.

Fourth, scholars made some progress in building organised talent management frameworks to serve as a platform for applying talent management practices. Musakuro (2022) proposed a seven-dimensional strategy framework for attracting and retaining academic workers. Saurombe and Barkhuizen (2020) suggested a talent value proposition architecture for higher education that combines institution brand, employment brand, and talent life cycle elements. The value statement emphasises the key attributes, both human and organisational, that are necessary for attracting and maintaining exceptional employees.

Furthermore, the number of validated evaluations of various talent management domains in higher education institutions has been slowly increasing. Theron, Barkhuizen, and Du Plessis (2014) developed and validated a diagnostic instrument to predict academic staff's voluntary turnover intentions. The primary predictors centred on managerial support, remuneration, and performance management. Mokgojwa (2019) created a talent risk management tool to assess the talent culture and occupational risks academic staff face at a South African higher education institution. Management support, strategic direction, physical workspace and resources, safety and security, and diversity management were some key talent culture elements that emerged. Occupational talent risks were associated with career development, talent recruiting, remuneration, performance management, and retention methods. Yener, Gurbuz, and Acar (2017) validated a talent management practice measure that includes talent planning, workplace culture, recruiting and retention, and talent development.

Finally, the researchers looked at demographic viewpoints and differences in talent management practices, specifically gender, age, ethnicity, job title, educational level, working hours, and work experience. Lyons (2013) found considerable discrepancies between gender groupings regarding the factors that promote and limit women academics' career advancement in higher education. Nijs et al. (2024) discovered a significant wage disparity between male and female academic staff. The lengthy period it takes to induct new hires into higher education institutions increases their likelihood of voluntary departure (Chethana & Noronha, 2023). Marozva, Barkhuizen, and Mageza-Mokhethi (2024) discovered that talent management techniques focusing on career and growth prospects, work environment, rewards, leadership, and work-life balance are critical in attracting millennial academics to higher education institutions.

However, the issue remains: where does talent management in higher education transition from what we think we know? In an ideal world, talent management in higher education is a mutually beneficial process that develops and enhances talent. Higher education institutions play an essential role in talent management, offering development, training, and educational opportunities that prepare students for

future work (Trinh, 2023). As a result, these institutions serve an essential role in encouraging economic growth, stimulating innovation, and developing a skilled and knowledgeable workforce. Furthermore, higher education institutions invest resources in attracting and cultivating faculty members with the necessary skills and knowledge to support students' ongoing growth and development (van Beuningen, 2024). The job landscape in higher education institutions is changing dramatically because of technical advancements, demographic shifts, economic changes, and increasing global complexity (Schippers, 2024). These developments are changing the structure of higher education, altering instructional methods, academic pursuits, administrative processes, and overall student engagement. As a result, we face the problem of rethinking the best way to manage talent in higher education to perform its role of teaching a nation.

This study applies the principles of Idealistic Realism to investigate the beliefs and underlying truths that influence the talent management environment in higher education institutions. Idealistic Realism is a theoretical framework that combines idealism and realism to understand better and negotiate the complexities of human cognition, perception, and behaviour (Thomas-Fogiel, 2017).

This paper addresses the following research questions:

- What are the evolving ideologies in the higher education context that we need to be aware of?
- What are the idealistic, realistic complexities that talented individuals face in higher education?
- How can idealism realism best be combined to optimise workplace talent in higher education?

2. Methodology

This research paper followed a general literature review method (see Grant & Booth, 2009). A systematic method was required to carry out literature research on the topic, "Talent Management: The Idealistic Realism in Higher Education" to achieve a thorough comprehension thereof. The initial phase entailed establishing the boundaries and goals of the assessment. The main aim was to investigate talent management principles in higher education settings, with a specific focus on achieving a balance between idealistic objectives and practical strategies.

Subsequently, a literature search was conducted via academic sources like Google Scholar, JSTOR, PubMed, and specialised education journals. The keywords used to find relevant studies were "talent management in higher education," "academic talent management," "university staff development," "idealistic realism in education," and "human resource management in universities." To narrow down the search, it was essential to create specific criteria for what research to include and exclude. The

focus was on selecting peer-reviewed, current studies that directly addressed talent management in higher education (see Chen & Zhang, 2022; Martinez & McGrath, 2023).

After searching, sources were assessed and chosen based on their relevancy and quality. This entailed evaluating the degree of alignment between each article and the research topic and verifying that the sources were peer-reviewed and published in credible publications. Examining themes revealed common patterns and ideas, including how talent management is understood in educational and business contexts and the difficulties and possibilities of implementing corporate talent management practices in universities (Wilson & Brown, 2021).

The analysis and synthesis step entailed comprehensively examining multiple studies to discern commonalities and disparities. For instance, many institutions adopted distinct talent management strategies, resulting in diverse results. It was crucial to identify deficiencies in the existing literature, such as the need for sufficient research on the influence of talent management on non-teaching staff in universities or the use of cross-cultural approaches in global higher education institutions (Chen & Zhang, 2022). By synthesising the findings, it was possible to derive more comprehensive conclusions on integrating idealistic goals, such as promoting innovation and quality, with practical realities like budget limitations and institutional policies in talent management within higher education.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Talent Management Idealism: What we need to know

The primary purposes of higher education institutions are to distribute knowledge through teaching, facilitate knowledge progression through research, and actively interact with the community (Council on Higher Education, 2022). Teaching enhances people's abilities and understanding, whereas research aids in advancing scientific knowledge to bolster innovative endeavours (Olo, Correia & Rego, 2021). Community engagement enables the integration of research and external collaborations to achieve socio-economic benefits (Council on Higher Education, 2020). Talented individuals are undeniably essential for performing the major responsibilities of higher education institutions towards their key stakeholders. However, talent management research needs to pay more attention to the context, as evidenced by studies conducted by Dries (2013) and Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2020). Consequently, this has an impact on the efficient execution of talent management. The next part examines the diverse external and internal contextual elements that contribute to efficiently implementing talent management strategies.

The seismic shift to human-centric institutions: A report published by Deloitte (2018) revealed that the future success of an organisation hinges on the quality of the relationships between employers and employees. Considering this viewpoint, adopting a more human-centered approach to talent management in the workplace is crucial after the Covid-19 pandemic. To make higher education institutions more focused on human needs, it is necessary to evaluate and reconsider their organisational structures, cultures, policies, and practices. Regrettably, numerous higher education institutions operate within a highly bureaucratic framework, resulting in notable obstacles to decision-making, responsiveness, adaptability, and creativity. Terjesen (2022) argues that higher degrees of top-down rules impede the ability of universities to be innovative and autonomous.

Van der Sluis, Barkhuizen, and Schutte (2024) proposed a new organisational structure called relational bureaucracy. This structure allows for the inclusion of all stakeholders in various zones, enabling collaboration and fostering mutually beneficial working relationships to achieve the organization's strategic objectives. Higher education institutions can enhance their performance by actively involving stakeholders through effective internal coordination strategies that establish, sustain, and enhance stakeholder relationships using strategic talent management frameworks. Thus, the suggested relational bureaucracy structure advocates for a value-driven approach to talent management, optimizing talent by recognizing individual capabilities and enabling meaningful contributions in the workplace. The following is an emergency perspective, in which leaders collaborate using their distinct skills and resources to establish a mutually beneficial work relationship to address shared institutional requirements (Van der Sluis & Barkhuizen, 2023). This strategy facilitates collaboration between management and talent to effectively address higher education institutions' internal and external difficulties.

In pursuit of Hybridism: The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2021) and World Health Organisation (WHO, 2020) advocate for a hybrid work ecosystem in the post-Covid work environment. This involves allowing employees to manage their time and tasks independently, enhancing their sense of ownership and responsibility. Consequently, this increases employee engagement and performance (ILO, 2021). A hybrid model integrates remote and on-campus work, providing flexibility for academics, staff, and students while preserving the advantages of in-person engagement. Offering hybrid work arrangements can increase the attractiveness of organisations to prospective recruits and help retain existing skilled workers (ILO, 2020). Workers value the opportunity to have flexible and autonomous work arrangements, and organisations that provide these options are more likely to attract and keep exceptional employees. Research findings indicate a strong and direct correlation between implementing effective people management strategies, improving

individual performance, decreasing employee attrition, and achieving high university rankings (Nel et al., 2022). Furthermore, higher education institutions can optimise productivity, collaboration, engagement, and well-being for faculty, staff, and students by implementing a versatile and inclusive strategy that facilitates remote and on-campus work. This can be achieved using hybrid work models. Although flexible working hours at higher education institutions offer advantages, they can encounter difficulties due to conventional organizational cultures that emphasize fixed working hours and being physically present on campus (Osaili, Ismail, ElMehdi, Al-Nabulsi, Taybeh, et al., 2023). According to Haubrich and Hafermalz (2022), hybrid work arrangements in higher education institutions are currently uncertain, with a mix of temporary and permanent elements, resulting in inconsistent implementation.

The development of novel legislative frameworks: The right to disconnect refers to individuals' entitlement to disengagement from work-related communication and technology outside their designated working hours (Deranty, & MacMillan, 2017). The "right to disconnect" refers to a legal or regulatory framework that grants employees the liberty to detach themselves from work-related electronic communications outside their regular working hours (European Parliament, 2021). The worldwide acceptance of this concept has quickened due to the growing incorporation of digital technologies in both professional and personal spheres. These issues have sparked concerns over the equilibrium between work and home life, the welfare of employees, and the all-encompassing character of the "always-on" culture (Sørensen & Matthews, 2018). The concept of the right to disconnect seeks to tackle these problems by granting employees the legal entitlement to disengage from work-related communications beyond their allocated working hours. This initiative promotes a healthy work-life balance and safeguards the well-being of employees (International Labour Organisation, 2020). The importance of the freedom to disconnect is increasing in higher education since ongoing online working practices are jeopardizing the well-being of academics and staff. Utilizing technology for research might result in a higher workload due to the need to manage data, analyse it, and collaborate online (Selwyn, 2016). Although technology presents various advantages and possibilities for advancement, institutions must acknowledge and tackle the difficulties and consequences of technostress by providing sufficient support, training, policies, and fostering an organisational culture that encourages healthy technology usage and a balance between work and personal life (Bernard, Borokhovski, Schmid, Tamim, & Abrami, 2014).

Traditional versus entrepreneurial universities: The emergence of the knowledge economy has highlighted the significance of innovation, entrepreneurship, and research monetisation. As a result, universities have embraced entrepreneurial endeavours (Radko, Belitski, & Kalyuzhnova, 2023).

institutions have a crucial role in promoting innovation, developing entrepreneurship, and positively influencing society as higher education and the knowledge economy change. This makes entrepreneurial institutions essential in the evolving landscape (Awad, & Salameh, 2023). The emergence of entrepreneurial universities represents a significant shift in the traditional role of higher education institutions. Historically, universities have predominantly prioritised the areas of teaching and research. Given the changing economic, social, and technical landscapes, higher education institutions (HEIs) are more motivated to engage in entrepreneurial activities to enhance their importance, longevity, and impact (Wangenge-Ouma & Kupe, 2020). Talented scholars frequently lead the way in pioneering research and innovation. Their specialised knowledge and breakthroughs can contribute to creating innovative technologies, goods, or services that have the potential for commercial success. Universities can assist these scholars by offering resources for obtaining patents, licencing, and establishing spin-off companies (Siegel et al., 2003). Hence, implementing talent management strategies is essential for cultivating and harnessing entrepreneurial aptitude within academic institutions, promoting innovation, commercialization, and societal impact (Mohammed, Hafeez-Baig & Gururajan, 2018). Entrepreneurial universities can create a dynamic atmosphere that fosters innovation, cooperation, and entrepreneurship across many fields and stakeholders by attracting, developing, and retaining individuals with entrepreneurial mindsets and skills.

The growing need for societal impact: Community engagement, the third primary purpose of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), is sometimes disregarded compared to teaching and learning (Zomer, & Benneworth, 2021). Considering the Sustainable Development Goals, it is probable that higher education institutions (HEIs) will play a crucial part in achieving the different visions and national development goals that have been declared. Entrepreneurial colleges frequently collaborate with their surrounding communities and tackle societal issues through research, innovation, and outreach endeavours. Their collaboration extends to non-profit organisations, government agencies, and community stakeholders to generate social impact, enhance the quality of life, and make a meaningful contribution to sustainable development (Guerrero, Urbano, Cunningham & Organ, 2016). Therefore, it is imperative for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to thoroughly reassess the expectations, roles, and duties of highly skilled persons at different levels to accomplish these strategic objectives (Olo et al., 2021). By implementing efficient talent management practices, faculty members can augment their capacity to influence society by empowering persons from underprivileged backgrounds, fostering social mobility, and actively contributing to general advancement and change.

A revised approach to quality teaching and learning practice: Teaching is mainly considered the core function of HEIs. Higher education institutions are consistently criticised for not preparing

workplace-ready students (Caplain, 2018). Students' teaching and learning demands have evolved significantly over the years due to various factors such as technological advancements, changes in societal expectations, and shifts in pedagogical approaches. With non-traditional students returning to education at different life stages, there's a need for flexible learning options, including online courses, evening classes, and accelerated programs (Van Staden & Naidoo, 2022). As a result, there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to teaching. As such, academics are under increased pressure to ensure they possess the requisite knowledge and skills that can be translated into employability student skillsets.

In addition, South African higher education institutions (HEIs) face the challenge of catering to a highly diverse student population. This includes many students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and those who formed part of a basic education system, leaving them ill-prepared for the rigorous demands of university studies (Badat, 2021). Effective talent management can help higher education institutions (HEIs) recruit faculty members with extensive expertise and a profound comprehension of teaching in a diverse environment. Addressing the skills needs of students requires a proactive approach from educators, policymakers, and institutions. Collaboration, innovation, and a commitment to lifelong learning are crucial to ensuring students have the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Furthermore, efficient talent management in higher education institutions (HEIs) can address these disparities by harmonizing academic curricula with industry requirements and providing students with pertinent job market competencies (Chethana & Noronha, 2023). A study by van Wyngaarden, Pelton, Oquendo, and Moore (2024) highlights the need for more equitable learning experiences, access to consultants who can assist in developing and implementing curricula in the classroom, educational coaching, and access to professional development opportunities.

Rethinking Research and Innovation for Impact: Higher education institutions are evaluated according to their engagement in research and research-related endeavours. The advent of digital technologies has completely transformed research methodology. Scientists can now use advanced computer tools, high-speed computing, and data analysis techniques to study and simulate intricate processes and analyse datasets (Weller, 2011). Research centres are closely examined for their function in fostering interprofessional and postgraduate research collaboration and staff capacity building (De Jongh, Titus, Roman & Frantz, 2023). University rankings and global reputation evaluations are determined by research output, impact, and citations. Higher education institutions that consistently produce high-quality research, publish in prestigious journals, and collaborate with renowned scholars and institutions enhance their prominence, prestige, and reputation in the global

academic community (Moed, 2020). As a result, they can attract exceptional talent, collaborators, and students (Nosek, Alter, Banks, Borsboom & Breckler et al., 2015). Therefore, talent management is critical in establishing a conducive climate for research and innovation. Higher education institutions (HEIs) can enhance the boundaries of knowledge, make significant contributions to societal advancement, and foster economic growth through innovation by attracting and maintaining highly trained researchers. Additionally, talent management offers the opportunity to creatively incentivize bright researchers in the face of reductions in research funding.

3.2 Idealist Realism Complexities for Talented Individuals

The rise of the "quiets": The emergence of the quiet quitting and quiet firing trends has underscored the significance of implementing people management strategies that enhance individuals' skills and abilities in a work environment that promotes psychological safety. Quiet quitting, as defined by Mahand and Caldwell (2023), is when employees experience mental, physical, and emotional disconnection from their workplace. These individuals commonly experience presenteeism and disengagement and are unwilling to exceed expectations (Remchannel, 2023). The factors that contribute to this phenomenon are central to talent management and include lack of support from leadership, insufficient compensation for additional work, limited career development opportunities, failure to appreciate employees, reduction in employee autonomy, and deterioration of trust relationships (Mahand & Caldwell, 2023; Remchannel, 2023). A study conducted by Hong, Cortez, Garcia, Lorenzo, and Ranieses (2023) revealed that university professors engage in quiet quitting due to a work-life imbalance caused by excessive job demands, excessive dedication to teaching, and insufficient institutional support.

Additionally, there is a growing tendency known as "Quiet firing" in which individuals are compelled to leave their professions voluntarily due to covert methods employed by management to isolate them from communication, feedback, strategies, and resources (Yikilmaz, 2022). Employees often encounter a state of psychological insecurity and a sense of being undervalued, leading to a decline in both their physical and psychological well-being. This scenario ultimately prompts them to resign from their positions (Anand, Doll & Ray, 2024; Biswakarma, Aithal, Singh, Gnawali, & Ghimire, 2024). A recent study by Badenhorst and Botha (2022) revealed a concerning increase in workplace bullying among academic and administrative personnel. The participants documented exclusionary behaviours as the most prevalent, followed by management misconduct, humiliation, belittlement, and antagonism. Workplace bullying has a detrimental impact on institutional performance and the ability to effectively provide student services (Pieber, Dunn, Marino, Groß, von Weizsäcker et al., 2022).

Another emerging concept is quiet hiring, which involves organisations prioritising the acquisition of internal personnel over gaining skills from external sources. Internal hiring enables the transfer of institutional expertise and culture, facilitating seamless transitions and maintaining continuity in operations. This method aligns effectively with an inclusive approach to people management, fostering a sense of value and worth among individuals (Swales, 2019). A study conducted by Nansamba, Ssekagugo, Augustine, and Ngunjiri (2024) showed that implementing just and unbiased internal recruiting procedures increased the dedication of faculty members at a private institution of higher education. Internal recruitment within higher education institutions offers several benefits that improve organisational efficiency, employee satisfaction, and cost-effectiveness (Pendola & Fuller, 2021). The advantages of this method encompass the preservation of institutional knowledge, financial savings, enhanced morale, streamlined onboarding, and the cultivation of leadership abilities. Higher education institutions can maximise these advantages by prioritizing internal promotions and fostering a culture emphasising talent development and acknowledgment. This strategy has the potential to result in a workforce that is more cohesive, driven, and accomplished.

Leadership Succession planning: Succession planning in South African higher education institutions is an intricate and diverse process affected by historical, governance, financial, socio-political, and capacity-building variables (Parker, 2015). Ensuring the uninterrupted presence of capable leaders and maintaining stability within institutions is crucial, especially considering the swiftly evolving higher education environment in South Africa. In their study, Mouton and Wildschut (2013) found that uneven governance structures and institutional regulations can impede the successful implementation of succession planning. Transparent and merit-based leadership transfers necessitate the presence of explicit norms and structures. The problem of leadership succession has emerged as a significant hindrance in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), as personnel in leadership roles must be sufficiently prepared to carry out their specialised duties (Bowman & Van Noy, 2013). On the other hand, there needs to be more individuals who can fill important positions. Insufficient financial resources and limited funding additionally restrict institutions from investing in leadership development programmes and attracting competent people for leadership roles (Naidoo, 2018). Talent management involves deliberately cultivating a group of persons with leadership potential, who are systematically groomed for future leadership roles (Morukhu, Mapanga & Mokgojwa, 2021).

Diversity and Inclusion: Diversity and inclusion in South African higher education institutions are of utmost importance as they reflect the intricate history of the country, its continuous evolution, and its dedication to rectifying historical imbalances (Badat, 2010). Seeking diversity and inclusion in higher education is crucial for promoting social justice and cultivating creativity, quality, and global

competitiveness. Although there have been attempts to enhance the availability of higher education for students who have faced historical disadvantages, there are still noticeable differences in enrollment, retention, and academic achievement (Letseka & Maile, 2015). Continuing endeavours aim to eliminate colonial influences from the curriculum, broaden the range of courses available, and integrate indigenous knowledge systems to foster inclusion and applicability (Kiguwa, 2018). Talent management is crucial in developing and strengthening an ethical and inclusive organisational culture. It encourages values, behaviours, and practices that embrace diversity and cultivate a sense of belonging (Masale, Barkhuizen & Schutte, 2021). In order to create a more inclusive environment that reflects the diverse makeup of South Africa, institutions can actively recruit and develop talented individuals from various backgrounds. By aligning these individuals with the institution's goals and values through talent management, institutions can establish a multicultural environment (Governmet & Waghid, 2017).

An inconvenient truth – the deterioration of staff well-being: Research into academic staff's well-being has been forthcoming for many years. Several initial researchers emphasised the elevated stress levels, burnout, and other pathological diseases among academic workers (Abouserie, 1996; Boyd & Wiley, 1994; Fisher, 1994). The factors that influence the well-being of personnel are widely recognised and include work overload, emotional labour, work-life balance, inadequate remuneration, and poisonous workplace cultures, among others. Remarkably, there is a lack of systematic measures aimed at tackling the elevated rates of pathological disease among higher education professionals, despite the daily problems faced by these individuals. South African higher education institutions (HEIs) have faced challenging circumstances in recent years, including heightened student violence, disruptions to lectures, life-threatening incidents, inadequate infrastructure, power outages, and the COVID-19 pandemic. These conditions have left many staff members physically and psychologically ill-equipped to carry out their daily responsibilities (Lesenyeho, Barkhuizen & Schutte, 2018). In recent studies, the subject of suicide ideation among academic staff has been recognised as a significant and worrisome problem (Okechukwu, Ogba, Nwofu, Ogba, Onyekachi et al., 2022). This necessitates the reconstruction and transformation of a secure and mentally healthy physical environment in higher education workplaces, to facilitate significant and intentional work interactions for staff (Van der Sluis & Barkhuizen, 2023).

Battle of the extremes - Longevity and Humanoid: The "longevity dividend" concept pertains to the advantages that society and the economy gain from higher life expectancy and the promotion of healthy aging (Lutz, & Kebede, 2023). Within higher education institutions, the longevity dividend has significant consequences for academic staff, namely retaining seasoned professors, fostering

lifelong learning, and using the expertise and knowledge of older academics (Unesco Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2019). Preserving seasoned faculty members can result in institutional stability, mentoring prospects for junior faculty, and improved academic excellence (Johnson, & Weiner, 2010).

Humanoid robots are being extensively studied and incorporated into other industries, including higher education. Humanoids have numerous and diverse applications. Humanoid robots can be teaching aides by presenting lectures, aiding with demonstrations, and offering individualised coaching. Alnajjar, Bartneck, Baxter, Belpaeme, Cappuccio et al. (2022) emphasized the capacity of humanoid robots in research and development endeavours, particularly in domains such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and human-computer interaction. Humanoid robots have the potential to offer practical training in specific skills and technologies, equip students for certifications that are specific to certain industries, and enable hands-on learning experiences (Ekström & Pareto, 2022). Both techniques are currently in their early stages of development but have the potential to significantly alter the higher education landscape and people management practices in the future.

4. Discussion: Idealistic Realism Talent for the Future - A 3Ps approach

In light of the aforementioned reflection, the author proposes a 3Ps approach to assist higher education talent in embracing the dynamics and opportunities presented by the new higher education landscape: Personal Mastery, People Mastery, and Professional Mastery. The 3Ps can form a strong foundation through integrating higher education idealisms to proactively prevent or mitigate the complexities of the new academic world of work.

Personal Mastery. Personal Mastery involves adopting several talent intelligences to propel performance and achieve objectives (Barnes, 2018). A talent intelligent person thoroughly understands their strengths and abilities (Barkhuizen, 2022). As the field of higher education continues to evolve, the importance of self-leadership in fostering personal excellence, managing workload, promoting innovation, and achieving career success will likely grow (Sullivan, 2012). Talented individuals should adopt self-leadership principles and try to be included in talent pools (Meyers (2020). Self-leadership intelligence also requires a combination of emotional and moral intelligence. Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in the professional lives of academic staff in higher education, influencing teaching effectiveness, research productivity, leadership effectiveness, well-being, and student engagement (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011). Moral intelligence includes integrity, responsibility, admitting mistakes, and forgiveness (Lennick & Kiel, 2005). The moral intelligence of academic staff plays a pivotal role in shaping the ethical climate, integrity, and responsible leadership within higher education institutions. It influences ethical decision-making,

academic integrity, leadership effectiveness, organizational culture, student engagement, and the ability to navigate ethical dilemmas effectively (Aras, 2022).

People Mastery. Personal Mastery entails the adoption of many talent intelligences to enhance performance and accomplish objectives. An individual with talent and intelligence is someone who have a comprehensive comprehension of their talents and capabilities. The significance of self-leadership in cultivating personal excellence, handling workload, encouraging innovation, and attaining career success is expected to increase as the field of higher education develops (Sullivan, 2012). Highly skilled individuals should embrace self-leadership ideas and strive to be part of talent pools (Meyers, 2020). Self-leadership intelligence necessitates the integration of emotional and moral intelligence. Emotional intelligence is extremely important for academic staff in higher education. It significantly impacts teaching efficacy, research productivity, leadership effectiveness, well-being, and student engagement (Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011). Moral intelligence encompasses honesty, responsibility, accountability, acknowledging errors, and forgiveness (Lennick & Kiel, 2005). The moral intelligence of academic personnel significantly influences the ethical climate, honesty, and responsible leadership within higher education institutions. Aras (2022) states that it impacts ethical decision-making, academic integrity, leadership effectiveness, organisational culture, student involvement, and the capacity to handle ethical challenges effectively.

Professional Mastery. Professional mastery among faculty members in higher education institutions is crucial in advancing instructional excellence, research proficiency, service dedication, student achievement, and institutional excellence (Bolman, & Gallos, 2011). Academic staff members who have achieved professional expertise play a crucial role in advancing their respective professions, promoting student learning and growth, supporting the mission and objectives of educational institutions, and improving the overall quality and prestige of higher education establishments (Baker, & Griffin, 2021). Enhancing research, providing assistance, and acknowledging the expertise of academic faculty can help cultivate a culture of exceptionalism, originality, and ongoing enhancement in higher education. Professional mastery, therefore, also involves the central tenets of business (i.e. contextual, operational, digital) intelligence to ensure relevance and competence in higher education (Gilch & Sieweke, 2020; Rant, 2018).

5. Management Implications

Integrating idealism and realism in talent management is essential in higher education institutions to effectively navigate the intricacies of academic and administrative leadership. Idealism promotes the

establishment of ambitious objectives that foster creativity in teaching, research, and student involvement. It motivates teachers and staff to challenge limits and create innovative educational programmes that align with upcoming trends and societal demands. Realism, on the other hand, guarantees that these ambitions are firmly based on the institution's existing talents, resources, and academic objectives. Institutions can effectively manage performance expectations and deploy resources efficiently by balancing aspirational aims and practical factors, such as faculty workload, funding availability, and accreditation criteria. This method cultivates a culture of high academic standards and institutional adaptability, empowering teachers and staff to make meaningful contributions to the institution's goal while adjusting to evolving educational environments and student demographics. Additionally, it fosters a conducive atmosphere that encourages the growth of skills, improves the faculty's ability to stay, and ultimately bolsters the institution's standing and influence in higher education.

6. Conclusions

To summarise, combining idealism and realism in talent management provides higher education institutions with a comprehensive approach that promotes a culture of excellence, creativity, and continual progress. This method considers the practical factors and limitations of the institution. Institutions can foster a skilled and committed workforce that promotes academic excellence, student achievement, and institutional sustainability in today's competitive higher education environment by aligning aspirational objectives with practical measures.

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