THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

TALENT MANAGEMENT IN CHINESE UNIVERSITY CONTEXT: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY APPROACH

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by

Mengqiong Liu, M.S.

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Abstract

This research aims to analyse the implementation of Talent Management (TM) in Chinese universities, spanning from policy to practice. The study explores the definitions and execution of TM in both literature and Chinese academic settings, considering various perspectives from organizations and individuals. It delves into the unique interpretations of 'talent' and 'TM' within the Chinese context. Additionally, the research discusses the interconnections between strategy, organizational culture, and other management aspects, along with the challenges and outcomes of implementing TM in Chinese universities. Practical guidance and theoretical suggestions are provided for universities embarking on TM systems and strategic development plans.

Using a qualitative case study design, 44 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted at two Chinese universities. While no definitive definition of TM has emerged, it generally involves an academic screening process with scientific research output at its core, serving functions of talent identification, attraction, retention, and development. The findings reveal that Chinese universities have started practicing TM, yielding benefits in performance improvement, strategy realization, and sustainable development. Context (national double first-class construction), strategy (both national and university-level), and corporate culture are significant in these efforts. Despite presenting challenges, TM also offers valuable development opportunities for Chinese universities.

This research contributes by addressing gaps in TM research, particularly within Chinese university contexts. It establishes a common language for TM research in a Chinese context, offering fresh interpretations of TM issues in Chinese universities. Moreover, it aids the Chinese academic community in understanding TM, contributing to global TM, and connecting with international research at policy, practice, and research levels. The study demonstrates TM implementation, highlighting similarities and differences in strategies across universities and providing evidence of TM's value. It aids future researchers and practitioners in comprehending best practices' dynamism and complexity, promoting further TM development. Lastly, it addresses the underdevelopment of TM in the public sector and complements the individual perspective of talent in TM research.

Keywords: Talent Management (TM), Chinese universities, Chinese context, Strategy, Organisational culture, Policy to practice.

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Declaration

I, Mengqiong Liu, declare that the PhD thesis titled "Talent Management in Chinese University Context: A Comparative Case Study Approach" is my own original work and effort, and it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

I confirm that all sources of information have been properly acknowledged.

I declare that this thesis was conducted ethically, and I have followed all ethical guidelines based on Research Ethics Committee.
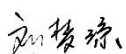
This thesis has been completed under the supervision of Professor Hugh Scullion and Dr.Geetha Karunanayake at the University of Hull.

Publications

This thesis is not directly related to any of the papers published during my study in the following journals.

> Liu, M. (2021). An Empirical Study on Talent Management Strategies of Knowledge-Based Organizations Using Entrepreneurial Psychology and Key Competence. Frontiers in Psychology, 12, 721245.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study aims to provide insight into Talent Management (TM) in China, one of the key emerging economies. Universities were chosen as the research object due to their high concentration on talent. The study examines TM's role in Chinese universities, its connection to strategy, organisational culture, and the contributions and challenges of its implementation. Additionally, this study will contribute to understanding the characteristics of the Chinese context and to improving understanding of TM in Chinese universities. In Section 1.2, it provides an overview of the research background for this study, In Section 1.3, it explains why this study selected Chinese universities as the research object. Following the explanation, Section 1.4 proposes the purpose of this study and the research questions. In Section 1.5, the significance of this study is highlighted. In section 1.6, an overview of all the chapters is provided and the thesis is explained and discussed.

1.2 Research Background

Since the publication of the McKinsey War for Talent Report in the 1990s (Michaels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod, 2001), enterprises have been waking up to the potential value of TM as well as its global challenges. In the current context, TM is particularly decisive because an organisation's talent is one of the principal factors determining whether a business is able to achieve long-term organisational sustainability and success despite the economic downturn (McDonnell *et al.*, 2017). The struggle for talent has become increasingly fierce on account of the disappearance of traditional advantages and the predicament of attracting and retaining talent (Dries, 2013). Talent strategy is a major component of national core competitiveness (Wang, 2011). With countries competing to attract talent on a global scale, it is not only fought at the level of salary and employee benefits, but is also a competition between TM systems (Ashton and Morton, 2005). All kinds of factors, including institutional systems, policy environment, cultural identity and social atmosphere etc., have affected the development of talent, and determined the flow direction and outputs of international talent (e.g., Iles et al., 2010; S. Harvey, 2014; Sheehan, 2006). As a result, the research on strategic TM has received extensive attention.

Researchers have suggested that TM should be further developed (e.g., Tarique & Schuler, 2010). Although there are some quite specific studies of why TM matters, a formal definition of the central concept is still lacking(Lewis and Heckman, 2006). Correspondingly, in the academic world, the field of TM is still in its infancy compared to human resource management (Scullion & Collings, 2010). Several comments are offered in the literature regarding this phenomenon. For example, the term talent has, thus far, only been conceptualised in very broad or generic terms (Faust, 2008); some specific aspects of managing talent have been examined but the academic TM literature stills need to overcome its inertia and make progress (Dries, 2013); and also, additional empirical research is welcomed from as many angles as possible, especially in a qualitative methodology (Stahl *et al.*, 2007). In addition, McDonnell (2011) suggests addressing three key aspects of TM, namely: the intrinsical link between corporate strategy and talent management, the identification of talent, and the efficiency as well as the effectiveness of talent management.

Innovation-driven development requires TM. In our increasingly technological age, innovation is critical to solving the issues people and nations face. Cho & Moon (2000) proposed four stages of national economic development, which they traced historically from Adam Smith to Michael Porter: the 'diminishing returns to factors of production' in traditional economic development, the 'bottleneck of scarce resources' in the factor-driven stage, and the international financial crisis in the investment-driven stage. All of these stages have had inescapable empirical consequences, and the innovation-driven stage, as a solution, is changing the contemporary world. For example, the United States issued its 'Strategy for American Innovation' in 2009, 2011, and 2015, respectively. It is the first time in the history of the United States that the National Innovation Strategy has been continuously and intensively issued, and the position of innovation in the U.S. Strategic system has risen to an unprecedented height (Obama, 2011). Similarly, the European Commission adopted the 'Europe 2020 Strategy' in 2010, focusing its future economic development on an intelligent economy dominated by knowledge and innovation, and increasing the proportion of R&D investment in GDP to 3% (Çolak and Ege, 2013). The UK invested 1 billion pounds to establish the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF) in 2017, and allocated an annual budget of 250 million pounds to be spent over the next four years to continue to build a team of highly skilled research talents, including attracting global talents from overseas. The Chinese government

also regards the theory of innovation-driven development as a viable solution, and it is widely seen as a strategic approach to maintaining sustained economic growth, meeting the needs of economic and social development, enhancing the country's core competitiveness, and also developing a basic national policy into a national strategy (Li, 2020).

Innovation-driven development relies heavily on talent. As a result of the rapidly growing demand for talents from the innovation-driven scientific and technological revolution, talents have a higher turnover rate, and, like resources, energy, currency etc., more internationalised and scarcer (Allen & Vardaman, 2021). Competition for attracting talent at the level of nation, region, and enterprises has begun, highlighting an urgent need for TM in order to effectively cope with the development and reform of talents globally, and systematise talent growth and development to ensure talents are trained and developed consistently (Scullion & Collings, 2010). In the past, concern with the development of talent was restricted to those in power, but in the contemporary context, issues associated with talent have become mainstream. However, given the dynamic and rapidly developing nature of talent issues, new approaches are needed, such as the diversified and systematic strategic management of talents.

China has made TM a top priority. China is one of the most highly populated countries in the world and has outstanding advantages in talent scale. China has maintained a miraculous level of sustained and rapid development for more than 30 years, compared with western countries; however, its late-mover advantage is no longer obvious (Chang, 2020). Its demographic dividend has weakened and its talent dividend has not yet been exploited (Cai, 2010). The Strategy of 'Strengthening the Nation with Talent,' which outlined the overall strategic idea of building a world-class talent center and innovation centre has been proposed (Wang, 2012). The application of this strategy has since expanded to various industries, enterprises, and organisations, and has had a significant positive effect on the development of TM. The aim of the strategy is to transform China from a large source of international immigrants to a destination country for international immigrants and from a large talent country to a powerful talent country. Moreover, it also coordinates the multi-level relationship between the government, market players, social organisations, talents, etc., enabling collaboration in the development of talent. Given its increasingly specialised workforce, China is developing its international competitiveness and is able to respond effectively to multiple challenges. However, TM in China has been understudied, and as a consequence, there is little awareness

of the Chinese context within the global talent market.

The aim of this research is to contribute to the development of the study of TM, compensate for the deficiency of previous studies and provide a reference point for future research. More broadly, it is hoped that this research will provide an effective introduction to the Chinese context.

1.3 Why TM in Chinese Universities?

As universities function as the 'processing plants' of knowledge, they are increasingly prominent in the era of the knowledge economy (Florida, 1999). Poocharoen and Lee (2013) conducted a comparative analysis of TM in the public sectors of Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. Their study delves into various TM schemes, presenting a framework that enhances comprehension of the values and contextual factors shaping TM practices. Although these countries employ similar names for their TM initiatives—such as scholarship programs, training for high-potential officers, and special pay scales for identified talents—a more in-depth scrutiny uncovers notable distinctions in the implementation of these schemes.

In China, the university functions as a microcosm of wider society. They have the largest pool of scientific researchers with highest level of education and are involved in foundational research and cutting-edge technology research in China (Shen & Wang, 2018). Based on the Human Resources Statistics Report of China (2016), the number of R&D personnel in universities has reached 360000, accounting for 9.3% of the total number nationally. According to this study, of this group, 29.1% have a doctoral degree and 40.7% will be qualified to masters-level by the end of 2016. A university is not only an organisation, but also provides a unique life existence, which integrates and accommodates talents, and guides behaviour with unique cultural values (Tam, 2002).

According to the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, in December 2017, the state started to focus on supporting some Chinese universities to become world-class, with first-class teaching staff, as part of the National Double-First Class Strategic Plan. The implementation of TM in universities has drawn unprecedented and wide attention (Yang & Wu, 2017) and the ability to attract talents, maintain accomplishments, develop reputation and ranking has become a central focus for universities and one of the most important

indicators for the government in terms of appraisal and evaluation (Liu, 2019). However, faced with numerous talents, the existing system is not able to market the value of the talents in the most effective way, at times causing the depreciation of human capital (Xu, 2019).

Management, in essence, involves replacing recklessness with wisdom, replacing habit with knowledge, and replacing force with cooperation (Drucker, 2012). Universities are gradually becoming aware that it is difficult to reach a high level of achievement relying on traditional human resource management; as a result, the role of talent management in enabling universities to obtain and maintain a leading position in universities is increasingly clear to interested parties (Li, 2014). First-class universities need both first-class talents and first-class TM.

The focus in this research is on university teachers. This is a very complicated professional group, which is fundamental to the development of universities. Teachers do not produce goods or services, but rather knowledge, professional development, and the pursuit of the truth and scientific exploration. Their output is hard to quantify in terms of 'product', time, and quality etc. Therefore, they have been referred to as 'elastic workers' (Zhang & Zhao, 2014). Moreover, on account of the value of human capital and the flexitime policy of university teachers, it is hard to manage in practice. University personnel can determine their own research based on their own preferences, and together with aging and talent flow, the human capital and the competitive advantage of certain university disciplines are at risk of decline.

In short, universities are typical human resource-intensive organisations (Cascio, 2015), and as the main body of human resources in universities, teachers are highly educated and engaged in creative labor. This research summarises the characteristics, application, development history and existing studies of TM in Chinese universities, indicates some issues and provides some suggestions for future research.

1.4 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

This study addresses the research questions regarding TM in universities in the Chinese context, which has been underexplored by current TM literature. My objectives are:

First, global TM has little knowledge of practice and academic research in the Chinese context, where the topic of TM remains a relatively unexplored, underdeveloped concept. This research looks to close current gaps in TM literature and contribute to broadening its scope by providing survey results in Chinese universities. By connecting existing research and interpretation of TM, a definition more in line with Chinese context will be proposed in this research.

Second, TM has become the most concerned topic of Chinese university administrators, and academic research in this context has taken time to catch up. This research aims to make contribution to introduce the understanding, implementation and contribution of TM in Chinese university to academics and practitioners, and realistic references for a broader study and practice. Due to the particularity of the research context, this study has carried on a more in-depth discussion from the perspective of policy to practice.

Third, Chinese universities encountered issues and challenges in implementing TM, which is instructive for the theoretical research and future practice of TM, especially in the field of global TM and TM in public sector. This research aims to discuss the main issues/challenges of implementing TM in particular Chinese universities, involving the main recruitment, attraction, and retention challenges in Chinese universities. Based on the lack of multidimensional discussion in this field, this research provides insights and discussions from both individual and organisational perspectives.

Forth, this research also aims to find out the links of TM with strategy and organisational culture, and other areas of management by examining the regarding the formulation of existing TM systems and strategic development plans.

More specifically, the following research questions need to be addressed:

1. What does the concept of TM mean in Chinese university?

2. How is TM implemented in Chinese university?

3. How does TM fit with strategy and organisational culture?

4. What are the main issues/challenges of implementing TM in particular Chinese

universities?

In addition, there are some subquestions:

- What is the progress of TM in Chinese universities?

- What are the main recruitment, attraction, and retention challenges in Chinese universities?

- What are the links between TM and other areas of management, such as performance management, rewards management, etc?

1.5 The significance of this study

The findings of this study are significant for both academics and practitioners for the following reasons:

First, this research on the Chinese context has important theoretical meaning and practice value because it provides insights into TM in China, a context which has not yet been fully investigated and understood. Moreover, the findings of the present research are based to a significant extent on a theoretical background imported from a western context, and the applicability of this context is explored in relation to the specifics of the Chinese context which result from the peculiarities of China's political system. With the development of research on global TM, and more Chinese enterprises and talents participating in the international market, researchers are curious about the state of TM in the Chinese context. The second chapter reviews talent management and universities in the Chinese context. My experience of, and insight into, the Chinese context, place me in a strong position to enrich the relevant research concerning TM in China. Also, this study explores the broader question of whether western models of TM fit with Chinese culture.

Second, this research develops qualitative research within the field of TM. According to statistics, TM research is dominated by quantitative analysis, and approximately 56% of all empirically based papers drew upon quantitative data (McDonnell *et al.*, 2017). However, it is necessary to provide more qualitative perspectives, which address individuals, subjectivism, and phenomena within a specific context for a better understanding of the concept of TM.

Third, this research has theoretical and practical significance for enriching the concept of TM, relevant talent theories, promoting rational talent identification, talent attraction, talent retention, and talent development, as well as other relevant areas of management.

1.6 Thesis Structure and Outline of Chapters

This section provides a general overview of this study. The chapters are as follows:

CHAPTER TWO: Chinese Context

In this chapter, the location of the study is described in detail: the Chinese context is presented in detail and the reasons for its inclusion as a full chapter are explained, as well as the significance of the Chinese context for this research. At first, readers are given a general overview of China's general situation, including its location, region, demography and the challenge of implementing TM in the corresponding context. This chapter then explains the institutional logic of China's national governance and Confucianism culture and their impact on TM. Moreover, it discusses the main contexture challenges that are aroused from culture, technological progress, sharing economy, and changes in organisational forms. This is of particular significance because, in China, politics and institutional structure have a great influence on TM research. Then, this study introduces the context of the Chinese public sector, and the basic situation of Chinese universities, including the double first-class strategy, to enable a thorough understanding of the development and role of TM in Chinese universities.

CHAPTER THREE: Literature Review – Talent Management in Theory

In this chapter, the origins, current state, and theoretical grounding of TM literature are reviewed in detail. The definition of the terms talent and TM are discussed. Key arguments and judgements in academia are summarised. In particular, this section provides a greater understanding of talent and TM in the Chinese context than is found in previous studies. In addition to discussing the theoretical architectures of TM, this study reviewed the literature on talent identification, attraction, retention, and development in universities, and also discussed existing research insights in the Chinese context.

CHAPTER FOUR: Research Design and Methodology

In this chapter, the key decisions and choices regarding the research design and methodology are outlined. The philosophical stance of this study and the reasons for choosing a qualitative research approach are explained, and the strategies for data collection and data analysis are provided.

CHAPTER FIVE: Empirical Findings

In this chapter, I expound upon the empirical findings derived from the case studies, elucidating responses to the central research inquiries: "What does the conceptualization of TM encompass within the context of Chinese universities? How is the operationalization of TM manifested within these academic institutions? In what manner does TM harmonize with strategic initiatives and organizational culture? What are the principal impediments and challenges attendant to the implementation of TM within select Chinese universities?" The ensuing discussion sequentially unveils the research findings and transitions from a theoretical framework to practical application, providing nuanced perspectives on the role of TM within Chinese universities. This examination encompasses viewpoints from both institutional and individual vantage points. Throughout this analytical journey, I systematically explicate the findings and insights gleaned from an examination of two distinct cases.

CHAPTER SIX: Discussion

This chapter synthesizes empirical findings and explores the nuanced aspects of TM within China's socio-cultural context. Sections delve into operational facets, covering talent identification, attraction, retention, and development. The discourse extends to the interplay between TM, organisational strategy, and culture, unravelling symbiotic relationships shaping the talent landscape. The chapter dissects TM contributions, engaging in a comparative analysis, and concludes with a succinct summary of key insights.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion

In this chapter, a summary of this research and the main findings is provided. Furthermore, it provides a conclusion regarding this research's contribution, its implications for practice, and limitations, and outline future research possibilities. At the end of this chapter, it reflects on the process of completing the study from a personal, academic development perspective.

Chapter 2 Chinese Context

2.1 Introduction

Examining the impact of contextual dynamics in TM is particularly enlightening regarding its conceptualisation, implementation and effectiveness (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). Moreover, Thunnissen and Gallardo-Gallardo (2019) argue that contextualising TM research allows researchers to build the bridge between academia and practice by enhancing research rigor and practical relevance. However, most management and organisation studies default to the Western context (Jia et al., 2012). Management research can suffer if it restricts itself to the Western model and some scholars, therefore, have championed contextualised studies, especially context-specific research (Fan, 1998). To answer this call, this chapter examines the external environment of TM and universities in China, and the discussion is based on the Chinese context.

The development of talents is closely tied to the advantages and disadvantages of the social environment. Section 2.2 introduces the site, region, demography and Confucianism in context of this research, and the challenges of implementing TM in the Chinese context. In addition, it describes the institutional logic of China's national governance and how it impacts TM, illuminating the basic logic of the development of China's talent policy and decision-making system, and the construction of its TM system. In the last part of this section, the main contextual challenges in implementing TM in China are analysed, in relation to culture, technological progress, the sharing economy and changes in organisational forms. The Chinese public sector is described in section 2.3, and the Chinese university context is described in section 2.4. Finally, conclusions are presented in section 2.5, and the key points of the main environmental challenges when implementing TM in China are summarised.

2.2 General Situation of China

2.2.1 Site and Region

Located in eastern Asia, west of the Atlantic Ocean, China is an ancient, mysterious land with a long cultural history. As the world's third largest country, with a land area of about 9.6 million square kilometers, it was the most densely populated place in the world for thousands of

years (Üskül and Oishi, 2018), and is now home to over 1.4 billion people (NBS, 2021). Geographically, China is located next to Russia, India, and other major countries in Asia, and is part of the most economically active region in the world (Xiaoming, 2006). The Chinese nation is a unified country of many ethnic groups, and the Han nationality together with 55 other ethnic groups have contributed to the achievements of China historically (Yang and Wu, 2018). In total, there are a total of 34 provincial-level administrative units in China. In his book "The Clash of Civilizations and the Reconstruction of the World Order," Huntington (1998) claims that China is not just a country, but also a civilisation; that is to say, it is not only a region and a political power, but a combination of different systems, and each system has a long history and unique culture, as well as high achievements in particular industries.

Since China has a large population and numerous ethnic groups, the nation's conditions are complex and even contradictory. The country's first-tier cities are characterised by levels of wealth comparable to that of the metropolises of many developed countries, but in the remote and rural areas, poverty remains (Yao, 2000). China was a weak and poor country that suffered greatly at the hands of other powers, and was even referred to as the sick man of East Asia (Hu, 2013). Historically, the Chinese once regarded the Western world as the future and the center of modern civilization due to wars, semi-colonial and semi-feudal societies, as well as its characterised undeveloped technology and education (Huntington, 1996, 2000). China's current national strategic goal is to reach the level of moderately developed countries by 2050 (Hu *et al.*, 2021). In 1949, under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, New China (Zhongguo, in Chinese) was founded and the socialist political system with Chinese characteristics was established (Jinping, 2017). As a result of reform and opening up in 1978, China entered a period of rapid economic development (Wang & Hu, 2010), and as a result of the improvement of China's national strength, China is once more being recognised internationally. However, while the country has a massive economic output, its per capita income is still far behind that of developed countries (Pritchett, 1997). This gap needs to be narrowed by improving the level of science and technology, but it will be a very long process (Zhang, 2006).

There have been heated discussions about regional issues in China due to its vast territory, and several research studies have been conducted on regional economic disparities (e.g., Fan et al., 2011; Lu & Lo, 2007, etc.). In spite of the general consensus that China's regional

economic development is unbalanced (e.g., Chen, 2010; Kenneth Keng, 2006; Wang, 2016; etc.), there is significant variation in the conclusions that studies have drawn regarding the trends and influencing factors of regional disparities. The report issued by the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China stated that the most fundamental contradiction in Chinese society is the conflict between the growing needs of the people for a better quality of life and the unbalanced growth of the country (Thanh, 2017). As can be seen, China's regional development gap is an important manifestation of the development imbalance, and an important basis for the state to formulate and adjust its regional policies (Wang, 2015).

Prior to 2013, China's regional development imbalance was mainly due to the imbalance in economic output and population distribution between the eastern and western parts of the country (Wang, 2015). 13.52% of the country's land area falls in the east and 41.38% falls in the west (Cheng *et al.*, 2020). There are several reasons for the disparities between the two regions. First, it was initially decided by the government to promote a strategy to develop the southeast coast first (Vogel, 1989). Second, the western region is the region with the most serious ecological degradation in China (Li *et al.*, 2021). More specifically, due to severe droughts and lack of rain, soil erosion is severe, and the local ecology is extremely fragile, which directly threatens local agricultural productivity, but also increases the population pressure in the area (Deng and Bai, 2014). Unfavorable natural conditions have caused the western region to fall into a vicious cycle of ecological degradation; increasing population pressure leads to increasingly poverty-stricken populations, which in turn causes worsening ecological conditions (Shen, 2004).

Additionally, another gap has emerged in China's regional economy: the North-South gap (Yang, Ju &Tu, 2021). The main reason for the gap lies in the evident advantages of the South in policy environment, ecological environment, industry, science and technology, etc (Liu, Zhang and Zhang, 2022; X. Zhang *et al.*, 2022). Some scholars have argued for a civilisational difference as a causal factor, because North China's culture is a complex of farming civilisation and nomadic civilisation, and South China's culture is a complex of farming civilisation and marine civilisation (Yang, Ju &Tu, 2021). In addition, some researchers believe that the gap between the North and South is fundamentally a gap in the degree of marketisation (Qiang and Jian, 2020), and the dominance of the South indicates a victory of a market economy over a planned economy. Other studies have pointed out that the East-west gap is giving way to

the North-South gap in China's regional development (Yang, Ju &Tu, 2021; Xu, 2021), but both still exist. Therefore, in China, regional development imbalance is also a challenge in terms of implementing TM, which takes different forms and presents results in different regions and organisations. Therefore, for its case studies, this study selected two universities which differ entirely in terms of geography and various other factors. Of the two universities selected in this study, one is located in a developed coastal city in southeast China and the other is located in an underdeveloped area in northwest China. The divergence in the context of the two selected universities enables all issues related to TM that may exist in Chinese universities to be analysed.

2.2.2 Demography

China is the world's most populous nation, and in terms of demography, the implementation of TM in China faces the following challenges:

(1) Demographic structural change.

As traditionalists (born before 1946) age and baby boomers (born between 1947 and 1964) have aged, Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980) (Krohn, 2004), millennials (born between 1981 and 1995), and Gen Z (born after 1995) (Rue, 2018) have become the dominant force in the workplace. Many young employees with distinct personalities have joined the enterprise and play increasingly important roles. As a result of this change in personnel, TM is faces significant challenges in adapting to the new workforce.

The first step in this process is the increasing number of employees from the new generations mentioned above. Their preferences towards leadership style in China have changed significantly. Ren et al., (2018) noted that new-generation employees (Millennials and Gen Z) in China strongly prefer leaders with high relationship-oriented skills, which indicates a significant break from the past. Employees of these new generations also put more emphasis on work-life balance and prefer a flexible working style and timely feedback on work (Wu and Uen, 2015). Implementing effective TM for these new employees is a challenge.

The second problem relates to the aging of the traditionalist and baby boomer generations. China has entered an aging development stage (Lu and Liu, 2019). According to data released

by China's National Bureau of Statistics (2021), by the end of 2019, the number of people over 60 in China had reached 254 million, accounting for 18.1 percent of the total population. Chinese policy makers must consider how to develop the value of aging talent, how to enhance the human resources of the elderly, and how to continuously learn from the experience of the elderly in order to continue to create value.

Third, China's demographic dividend is not as significant as it once was. Many scholars believe that China's economic growth has benefited from the demographic dividend, especially the dividend of the labour force (e.g., Fang, 2016; Garnaut et al., 2018; Mason & Kinugasa, 2008, etc.). However, the number and proportion of China's working-age population has been declining since 2012, raising concerns about economic development (Garnaut, Song and Fang, 2018). Due to the one-child policy, China's population growth rate has slowed sharply, and the fertility level continues to be low. As a result, the problem posed by the aging population is becoming more and more serious, which is causing a structural shortage and aging of the labour force. Moreover, this critical issue not only brings heavy pressure and severe challenges to social and medical care and the security system, but also further seriously affects the global competitiveness of China's economy (Wang & Wang, 2019; Krohn, 2004). In 2015, the two-child policy was issued; however, the number of births in 2016 increased by only 1.31 million, and the annual births in 2017 and 2018 fell compared with the previous year (Zhai et al., 2016). Furthermore, although the three-child policy has been discussed since 2021, no evidence of changes has yet been observed or researched. The birth rate is far below the annual birth forecast by the National Health and Family Planning Commission (Wang, 2016) and the forecasts based on scholarly research (e.g. Huo, Li & Chen, 2016). It has, however, been predicted that even though China has abundant labour resources, the population dividend will eventually disappear as aging and low fertility rates continue (Cai, 2010). On the other hand, China's human capital is constantly improving, due largely to the rapid development of higher education, which will provide the most important talent base for the country's economic development. Higher education, then, provides a key route for China to respond to this challenge by attracting and developing talent and thereby benefitting from talent dividends by improving its human capital (Guo, Huang and Zhang, 2019). Therefore, how to change the population dividend into a talent dividend through the rational use of TM is the most fundamental challenge that China is facing.

(2) Talent flow is increasing.

As globalisation has developed, institutional reforms have been implemented, the Internet Plus environment has developed, and the economy has opened up, the flow of labour in China has become much easier and faster (Knight and Song, 2005). Moreover, Chinese talent is no longer constrained by employment relationships, employees' personalities are increasingly emphasised, and employee-free companies and platform businesses have enabled mass entrepreneurship (Fu, McKern and Chen, 2021). There is growing competition for talents between different enterprises and countries, which makes talent competition in China more challenging (Farrell & Grant, 2005). However, brain drain also causes many negative effects. Zweig & Wang's (2013) study of China's brain drain to the United States, fully illustrated the related issues. Further, through empirical research, some research has suggested that enterprises also face a decline in core competitiveness, information leakage, and core technology loss, along with possible group job-hopping, factors which, taken together, would result in very significant losses (e.g., Mengmeng et al., 2022; Qu, 2020).

Therefore, although the increased talent flow in China is not necessarily entirely negative, TM faces more challenges because of the high mobility issue, including retaining core employees.

2.2.3 Institutional Logic and National TM Strategy

China has had the unique fate of maintaining its particular civilisation, and according to China's historical experience, politics has consistently played a particularly critical role in economic development; without political progress, the economic development achieved in China not have been possible (Dittmer, 1995; Zhou, 2014). In distinction from western countries, China's public governance structure is party-led governance (Beck & Brødsgaard, 2022; Lawrence, 2013; Bray, 2009). The Party holds the core political power in the country, and the Party organisation plays a greater role in public governance than government agencies (Beck, 2021; Wei, 2014). In summary, without the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), new China would not have been possible, and in contemporary China, there is no other political force that can compete with the CCP, let alone replace it (Zhang, Brown and O'Brien, 2018). Political reform is, however, taking place in China; however, it does not involve changes in the fundamental political framework, but is instead focused on national governance (Guo, 2017; van der Kamp,

Lorentzen and Mattingly, 2017).

Grasping this political background enables a better understanding of China's TM strategies which are explored in detail in the following section

(1) The principle of TM under the Party leadership.

It has been over 20 years since the Party first put forward the principle of Talents under the Party leadership at the National Organisation Work Conference in December 2002. It functions as the foundation for China's TM work, which aims to pool outstanding talents from various fields in order to promote national development (Zweig and Wang, 2013; Chen *et al.*, 2015). Accordingly, the policy on further strengthening the work of TM by the Party, issued in September 2012, is the most authoritative and professional explanation to date regarding the principle of talent management. The policy emphasises strengthening the Party's macro-management of talents (Zhu, 2003). Specifically, according to the policy, the Party shall be responsible for macro-adjustment, policies and systems, coordination among stakeholders, service for various types of talents, and focus on making policies, integrating forces and creating an appropriate environment, ensuring the realisation of the strategy of strengthening the country with talents (Xiao, 2018). In this context, the formulation of TM policy needs to adhere to the strategic direction of the Party, TM policies need to be developed and issued by the Party, and the implementation of TM is determined by the leadership of the Party and implemented within its system.

In brief, TM practice in China differs greatly from TM practice in the West, and this is its most distinctive characteristic. As a result, the potential impact of this principle on the implementation of TM in China requires particularly careful consideration.

(2) The strategy of 'Strengthening the Nation with Talent'.

In the contemporary context, China's most important TM strategy is 'Strengthening the Nation with Talent.' It was proposed in 2002 and has been repeatedly revised since then (Wang, 2011). This study reviewed and summarised talent policy documents from the websites of the People's Government of China and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, which have been available since 2000 regarding specific talent policies.

An initial focus of the strategy is to scout talent and determine if the talent of scouted individuals suffices. In addition, policies are developed to improve professional promotion, further education, talent flow, human resource management in the public sector, and social security services, etc (NLDHR, 2006). The primary goal of these activities is the creation of large talent pools. By the end of 2008, the scale of talent reached 113 million, the proportion of human capital investment in GDP reached 10.8%, and the contribution rate of talent reached 18.9% (Zhu et al., 2011). This indicates great progress, but relative to developed countries, a significant gap remains. However, since 2008, national talent development activities have begun, enhancing Chinese society's broader talent strategy awareness and national resources investment (Sun, 2022).

Since 2010, talent policy documents have been released successively following a series of important talent meetings, such as 'the national medium and long-term talent development planning outline from 2010-2020' (State council, 2010) and 'Opinions on Further Strengthening the Party's Leadership on TM' (CPC office, 2012), etc. At this stage, the core issue addressed by the strategy is whether there are sufficient talents, whether they are sufficiently strong, and their international competitiveness. The competition for talent has been launched across China as a whole, as a result, is exposed to challenges such as homogeneous competition, market failure, etc (Wang and Sun, 2018). Nonetheless, a consensus has formed regarding the decisive role of talent in the development of innovation, which is consistently raised in policy-making contexts at various levels of government (Sun, 2022). By 2020, the scale of talent reached 220 million, with China's global innovation index correspondingly rising from 29th to 14th (Chen & Xuan, 2020). At the national level, the strategy 'Strengthening the Nation with Talent' has been prioritised and has become one of the most important strategies, and it will continue to play an important role as a long-term strategy.

2.2.4 Confucianism in context

This section aims to present an overview and interpretation of Chinese culture of Confucianism and the role of guanxi, and its implications for talent development strategy, especially in shaping or implementing them. Thus, a thorough understanding of Confucianism context is essential to comprehend the entire system.

Compared to Western society, Chinese society is in many ways distinctive in terms of its social conditions and culture; for example, the public's mentality, concerns, methods of seeking truth, capacity for rational, civilised dialogue, philosophical methodology, cultural inheritance, scientific spirit, educational goal, social expectations, moral fashion, and working environment are all features which differ from those characteristic of Western society. In Table 2.1 below, the social ideology of Chinese and Western society is compared in some aspects, but these comparisons are not exhaustive. Behind each proposition, there is a great deal of nuance at the level of content and classification. Nonetheless, the table serves to demonstrate the ideological differences between Chinese society and Western society in broad strokes.

Table 2.1 The difference in social ideology between Chinese society and Western society

	Western Society	Chinese Society
Social System	Post-capitalist society (Drucker, 1994)	Socialism with Chinese characteristics (Jinping, 2017)
Philosophy History	Reason and logic (Jayatilleke, 1967), natural philosophy (Needham, 1993), mathematics (D'Ambrosio, 1998), religion (Hunt, 2017), politics (Inglehart, 2017), ethics (Tiles, 2000), etc.	Chinese cultures of Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism (Tang, 2015), ethics (Wong, 2021), Confucian classics (Nylan, 2008), etc.
Way of Thinking	Empiricism, positivism (Comte and Bridges, 2015), scientism (Hayek, 1942), etc.	Confucianism, and explanations of words in ancient books (Hall and Ames, 1987)
Political and Economic Basis	Renaissance (Khanna, 2011), democracy, free market (Prasad, 2006), etc.	Western Learning (Jami, 2012), reform and opening up, socialism with Chinese characteristics (Guo, 2010)
Social Expectation	Interests, career goals, family inheritance, etc.	Graduating from the prestigious universities，respectable employment, family honour

China's social environment and culture are very different from those in the West, resulting in differences in the implementation of TM, and due to these differences, Chinese enterprises and government bodies necessarily encounter cultural shocks and challenges when implementing TM. In the implementation of TM, if there is a conflict between the values of enterprises and employees, the enthusiasm, satisfaction and performance of employees will be affected, which may eventually lead to brain drain. Latukha et al. (2022) elaborated on the brain drain caused by exogenous challenges, including culture shocks, however, as a result of globalisation, more Chinese enterprises have become global (Alon *et al.*, 2014). On the one

hand, how to simultaneously manage overseas Chinese employees and foreign employees in an effective cross-cultural is a challenge for TM; on the other hand, when it comes to Chinese culture, one must mention Confucianism.

The Confucianism has profound significance in the study of talent, often considered the origin of Chinese TM philosophy (Warner, 2014). Confucianism, founded by Confucius, is a cultural faction dominated by Confucian-related theories (Yao, 2000). From its inception to the present day, Confucianism has spanned thousands of years, permeating China's religion and political power (Zhang, 2021). It has interacted and blended with various cultures, and even in modern society, its philosophical ideas of Confucianism continue to exert a significant influence (Meng, 2012).

The most fundamental ethical concept in Confucianism is "仁(Ren)", refers to a moral and benevolent idea, which is commonly translated as benevolence or humaneness (Jing &Doorn, 2020). In Confucianism, benevolence is considered a core virtue, symbolizing goodwill, compassion, and care towards others (Wang, 2012). This concept emphasizes the cultivation of a deep concern for society and others by individuals, aiming to promote harmony, justice, and common interests (Zhang & Zhang, 2016; Eryong & Li, 2021). Therefore, in Confucian thought, the concept of benevolent leadership emphasizes a people-oriented approach (Wang, 2011). For example, Huang &Li (2011) made a study on people-oriented incentive mechanism in application of university management, they asserted that all incentive strategies are grounded in a people-oriented management approach. Yanbin & Chao (2011) addressed its function to build up and improve the working team safety. And Huang &Siththada (2022) lean towards understanding it as managing talent with a focus on develop their professional capability, as well as the psychological state of talents, and caring for their growth based on their investigation in a university in Guangxi, China.

However, the concept of benevolent has many implications and extensions, but at its core, it signifies that an individual should achieve unity between their behavior and inner virtues (Li, 2007). This is why Confucianism has consistently garnered attention from managers across different eras, continually receiving new interpretations and propagation.

The influence of Confucianism on modern TM is specifically manifested in several aspects.

Firstly, there is an emphasis on education and development. Confucianism highlights the importance of education, asserting that talent can be nurtured through learning and self-cultivation (Tan, 2017). This resonates with the contemporary human capital theory in TM (Warner, 2010). Confucius believed that the purpose of education is to elevate people's souls through benevolence, righteousness, and rituals, harmonizing their social behavior to serve society (Wei, 2013), which aligns with China's current talent policies, aiming to create a situation where everyone can develop their talents to the fullest.

Secondly, this theory also underscores the significance of caring for others and interpersonal relationships (Tu, 1998). In TM, this might be manifested by placing importance on fostering positive employee relationships and emphasizing intimate connections between leaders and team members to enhance teamwork and cohesion (Reich, 2011; Phuong-Mai, 2005, Zhou et al., 2016). However, besides the aspect of building good employee relations, due to the development of Confucian management thought, it is often intertwined with ethical and moral considerations (Wada, 2014; Romar, 2004). In interpersonal relationships, there is a tendency to be less effective in enforcing management systems, showing favoritism to acquaintances, leading to a lack of standardized constraints and norms on members' thoughts and behaviors, for example, Kutcher (2000) discussed dangerous friendships in the Confucian context which is his fifth relationship. Moreover, the long-standing Confucian idea of seeking harmony and avoiding differences has created a dependence on conformity and uniformity in talent (Nylan, 2008; Kim, 2009; Rozman, 2014). This protective approach towards the behavior and psyche of talents results in individuals often unquestioningly conforming to collective interests, rejecting any form of individualism, which is proposed by Gao in 2015. And she believed that the consequence is a homogenization of talents, a lack of creativity, and organisational stagnation.

In addition, Confucius' thoughts consistently reflect a class-based nature (Chang, 2010), placing importance on persistence, perseverance, and ordering relationships by status (Hill, 2006; Wright, 1983). This has led to excessive government intervention in the values and operational principles of most organisations (Frederickson, 2002), including universities. Often, universities have neglected their own strategic choices, mirroring national administrative structures in organisational architecture and talent strategy without effective self-realization, and this standpoint came from a comparative study in Chinese higher

education in the Confucian cultural context from Yang (2011).

Thirdly, Confucianism places significant emphasis on the concept of family (Lee, 2015), highlighting the importance of family in TM by focusing on employees' family backgrounds and values (Hong & Froese, 2023), and also, guanxi networks and job searches are deeply influenced by family factors (Huang, 2008). Besides, the extension of this family-centric view is the Confucian emphasis on loyalty and responsibility, reflected in TM as organisations tending to favor loyal and responsible employees (Hill, 2006), especially around the culture of Filial piety and loyalty (Hwang, 1999), and in that way employees are expected to be loyal to the organisation and willing to take responsibility for it.

Fourthly, Confucianism places emphasis on rules and regulations (Woods, 2011). In TM field, this can be understood as establishing an orderly organisational structure, standards and values, making TM execution more streamlined with processes and systems (Rarick, 2007). Min (2017) believes that this ensures the responsibility and interests of talents, emphasizing the rules and regulations that employees should adhere to, and valuing the etiquette and professional ethics in the workplace.

The reason why TM has been elevated to an unprecedented level of importance (Gallardo-Gallardo, 2021) is that it helps organisations meet the current and future development needs (McCauley & Wakefield, 2006). In China, a country with a profound cultural heritage, the influence of Confucianism, which has spanned thousands of years, is unique and continues to persist in a distinctive manner (Deng, 2011). This influence is ongoing and is expected to endure, shaping the culture in a significant way (Zhao, 2018).

Through the introduction of Confucian thought and its influence, it can be observed that within the Confucianism context, there has emerged the culturally specific interpersonal relationship known as guanxi. This has given rise to indigenous psychological research centered around guanxi. The use of the term 'guanxi' directly in Chinese pronunciation indicates that there is no better translation available to replace this term.

Some scholars consider the emphasized Guanxi in Chinese society as a significant reflection of Confucianism in economic behavior (Wong, 2007; Yeung &Tung, 1996). They categorize Guanxi into dimensions such as the Five Confucian Relationships (relatively ruler and subject,

father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and young brother, as well as friends), reciprocity, long-term interest orientation, chivalry, ritual system, and a sense of shame, etc. (Zheng et al., 2019; Hwang et al., 2009). Guanxi is mainly established through forms such as giving gifts, participating in weddings, funerals, birthdays, and meals (Hwang et al., 2009). It can also be transformed to others through identity recognition and introductions by intermediaries (Zheng et al., 2019).

In the context of leadership style research in China, many scholars directly compare Chinese entrepreneurs with a Confucian cultural background to transformational or charismatic leaders studied by Western scholars (Lin et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2016; Park et al., 2019). Zheng et al. (2000) argue that Chinese business leaders influenced by traditional Chinese culture should embody a paternalistic leadership style characterised by combining rewards and punishments, persuading people with virtue, and they have constructed a three-element model of paternalistic leadership: authoritative leadership, virtuous leadership, and benevolent leadership.

Many researchers have employed a core Confucian philosophical concept they identify with to explore its influence on employee behavior (Lin et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2005; Park et al., 2005). For instance, the Confucian value of interpersonal reciprocity emphasized in Confucianism may lead employees to proactively help others (Wang et al., 2005); the Confucian value of group orientation can result in employees supporting collective goals and safeguarding collective interests (Ip, 2009); the promotion of frugality in Confucian values can motivate employees to reduce company losses and eliminate waste (Efferin &Hopper, 2007). Fan (2000) proposed a scale reflecting the behavior of employees in Chinese companies, likens Confucian ethical behaviors to Western organisational citizenship behaviors.

In 1947, sociologist Fei Xiaotong proposed the concept of 'differential mode' to describe the interpersonal relationships in China, which is one of the most important theory developments of guanxi and the culture of one's own people (Yu, 2006). This differential mode of circles intricately summarizes the structure of guanxi that has persisted in China for thousands of years. At the center of the circle are one's own people, following the rules of personal connections; while on the outer edge of the circle are others, adhering to the principles of fairness. Indeed, the flexibility of this circle itself is remarkable. It can expand to encompass

not just oneself but extend to the nation on a larger scale. The idea reflects the adaptability and expansiveness of Chinese social relationships, where the concept of guanxi can extend from personal connections to broader societal and national networks. This flexibility allows for a dynamic interplay between personal and collective relationships within the broader context of Chinese social structures.

2.2.5 Other contextual challenges in implementing TM in China

The purpose of this section is to provide a sum of all factors and conditions that affect the development and growth of TM.

(1) Challenges posed by technological progress

A number of new technologies are profoundly affecting production and life in China, such as big data, artificial intelligence, and cloud computing (Y. Zhang *et al.*, 2022). More broadly, throughout the world, these new technologies have precipitated in daily life and working practices.

First, the wide use of the Internet has broken the limitations of time and space, enabling employees working in different places to communicate instantly. Almost all organisations, from government departments to enterprises, have embraced Internet technology, in some way or another. Enterprises are increasingly using Internet tools for communication, gathering information, releasing information, internal management, business services and other functions (Mao, 2022). When a team is required to complete a project or task, the members of the team are not necessarily required to start work simultaneously in a fixed office, but can work flexibly in terms of time and location, completely changing the traditional method of working. As a result of the trend for decentralised offices, TM will become more complicated and impose higher demands on HR in the future (Tucker et al., 2005; Cappelli, 2013).

Second, big data is being applied in a variety of areas. The first benefit of big data is that it can improve the rationality and efficacy of decision-making (Bian and Wang, 2021). Powered by big data (Jain and Maitri, 2018), HR team members can be freed from everyday administrative tasks, and focus on HR development strategy and the development of enterprises more broadly; for example, large numbers of prospective employees can be automatically identified,

filtered and matched based on the job requirements, different training programs can be optimised by needs, and the optimal configuration of human resources can be achieved. Angrave et al. (2016) stated, however, that HR is set to fail to meet the challenge big data poses, and analysed the reasons for this. In addition, this study argues that TM is also challenged by the application of vast amounts of data, with the most significant concern being issues of data security and sharing.

Third, artificial intelligence is increasingly widely used in HRM (Charlwood, 2021). For example, artificial intelligence can be used to set up various online scenarios to assess employees' and managers' processing ability s, increasing the accuracy and objectivity of talent acquisition (Albert, 2019). However, the increasing use of artificial intelligence will inevitably result in some jobs being replaced (Dirican, 2015). Therefore, enterprises need to consider which positions need to be adjusted and, in response to their growing demand for digital talents (Su, An and Mao, 2021), develop new strategic TM appropriate for the digitalised world.

(2) Challenges posed by the sharing economy

Knowledge economies are developing in a new direction through the influence of sharing economies (Zieba and Durst, 2018). By integrating scattered or idle resources, sharing economies meet supply and demand with low costs, high efficiency, and personalised characteristics, and thereby enact the process of income distribution. Importantly, Wang et al. (2021) provided evidence of this phenomenon based on an empirical study in China. Talent resources are also an important resource, among many,, and have received particular attention with regard to their values in the sharing economy. Liang et al. (2020), for example, illustrated a two-sided matching method of talent sharing in China, and demonstrated the existence of a trend from traditional 'organisation + employees' to a sharing 'platform + individuals'. The existence of a cooperative, win-win relationship between an organisation and its employees poses new challenges to TM, such as: evaluating the performance of external talents, balancing the number of internal and external employees, allocating work, and attracting excellent external talents while retaining internal employees, even in light of the increase in external talent.

(3) Challenges arising from changes in organisational forms

In China, organisations generate two forms of change: organisational miniaturisation and organisational structure flattening (Zhao *et al.*, 2021). To enable the realisation of agile organisations (Brosseau et al., 2019), HRM systems need to make adjustments accordingly, as does TM.

Table 2.2 Differentiation of organisational components brought to TM

Organisational system field	Traditional organisation	Agile organisation
Decision-making	Centralisation (Hall *et al.*, 1993)	Fully empowered (Hempel, Zhang and Han, 2012)
Work design	Structured (Chan, 1982)	Project-based (Wang *et al.*, 2020)
Work-flow	Fixed flow process (Chan, 1982)	More space for innovation (Wei, Xie and Zhang, 2017)
Career path	A certain development path (Gao, 2017)	More talent flow (Zhang *et al.*, 2019)
Talent development	Training plan (Cooke, 2005)	Diversified (Xiaohan and Rohana, 2022)

The change of the organisational form will inevitably require the adjustment of the personnel within the organisation. Talent is shifting from geographical space to virtual space, and working modes are increasingly flexible (Luo and Chan, 2020). Scientific research organisations, remote laboratories, cloud incubation, and cloud conferences enable the exchange of global talent and intelligence, and the proportion of virtual talent flow is increasing (Bo et al., 2019). It is possible to maximise the value of talents and promote the flow of intelligence by sharing talents in flexible ways, such as "long-term rent and short-term loan" (Liu *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, adjusting the TM system to adapt to the transformation of the organisation, improving performance, and guaranteeing access to talent pools as organisations become increasingly agile is a key challenge which TM faces.

2.3 Chinese Public Sector Context

In China, most universities are public sector, and almost all high-level universities are public. Therefore, this section focuses on the Chinese public sector context to enable a better understanding of TM in Chinese universities.

The Chinese public sector's HRM defines the civil service as encompassing all employees in government agencies and departments, as well as those who provide services such as health and education that are largely or entirely funded by the public (Burns, 2022). HRM in China's

public sector has a number of key characteristics. First, the maximisation of public profit. Notably, research has indicated that HRM in Chinese public sector obviously favours fairness over efficiency (Meng and Wu, 2015). Second, the requirement of strict political and moral qualities. Although the private sector also emphasises virtue and ethics due to the influence of cultural traditions, it is more important to emphasise the political views and moral qualities of people in the public sector because of the greater depth and breadth of the public sector's influence on the economy and society as a whole. Moreover, this point was confirmed by Van der Wal & Yang (2015). Furthermore, given the principle of operating under the leadership of the Party, political orientation is a prominent feature of those employed in the public sector. Finally, address institutionalisation and programmatics. Compared with private sector, the public sector's HRM is not flexible, but is instead more focused on standardised processes (Lin, 2020).

Furthermore, the Bianzhi system (Brødsgaard, 2002) operates in institutions and cadre management in China. This system is also referred to as the "big pot of rice" and "the iron rice bowl" (S. Wang, 2021). This is not a technical term; it simply implies that all individuals eat equally from the same pot, with the result that everybody's "bowl" will have rice to for them to eat. Importantly, the "bowl" is characterised as made of iron, which means it cannot be broken; life, in other words, cannot be destroyed. A person who has been enrolled in the recruitment system or distribution plan at all levels of government will no longer be at risk of unemployment. Therefore, any unit that hires or employs people has no right to dismiss them (S. Wang, 2021). Employees' medical costs, retirement pension, and so forth, are all paid for by institutions and the government. This is a very Chinese characteristic. Throughout the past 40 years, the most simple and fundamental hope of the Chinese people has been the elimination of unemployment, poverty and polarisation and the establishment of equality and common prosperity for all (Howard, 2020). As the number of employees increases with the establishment of businesses, the pressure on the provision of financial support is increasing, and the efficiency of public welfare services is decreasing (Ding, Goodall and Warner, 2000). Correlatively, the number of institutions committed to public welfare, such as universities and hospitals, is gradually declining, representing the abolition of the institution as such; in figurative terms, the original iron rice bowl has broken and has been gradually transformed into contract employment (Xia *et al.*, 2020). Universities have also started to cease using the

tenure system and are disinclined to offer permanent employment. Inevitably, this process has been plagued with controversy. Many people feel threatened by this process, while others believe it improves organisations' vitality by enabling more effective integration at the instutitional level (Huang *et al.*, 2021).

In summary, over the last 40 years, China's approach to managing human resources has changed significantly as it transitions from a planned economy to a market economy (Cooke, 2011), and undergoes a shift from the 'iron rice bowl' policy dominated by Soviet-inspired personnel management to one increasingly centred on Japanese-European cultures (Warner, 2005).

Some of the key challenges of this shift are as follows:

First, identify and promote those with passion for public service and associated competencies. Currently, talents are identified and promoted primarily through two paths: merit-based and 'guanxi'-orientated (Ma, Tang and Yan, 2015). The merit-based path emphasises performance and ability; performance is understood to directly relate to economic growth and effective governance (Burns, 2022). The promotion pathway is composed of distinct stages, and upward mobility can only be sustained by success at each stage. Promotion at a specific level is, therefore, not affected by the results of the previous stage. However, a major challenge faced by this pathway is that most work performance is difficult to accurately evaluate and effectively measure, and the performance of talents in different positions is difficult to compare horizontally. Moreover, it isolates talent development across stages and overemphasies on real-time factors in existing roles.

In contrast, the 'guanxi'-orientated approach considers that 'guanxi' connections are the decisive force for effective talent identification and promotion, and, in this system, both 'guanxi' type and 'guanxi' strength impact an individual's promotion speed (Ma, Tang and Yan, 2015). 'Guanxi' refers to the network of family relationships, relatives, friendships, colleagues, classmates, fellow townspeople, comrades-in-arms, and other relations which have a supportive role in terms of an employee's prospects for promotion (Fan, 2002). Talent development depends on the strength of 'guanxi' and the ability to seek the support of 'guanxi' at higher levels (Bian, 2019). Hao (2022) believed that both these paths to promotion are

critical, and characterised merit and performance as the extraneous factor, with 'guanxi' as the background factor; under the protection of a certain 'guanxi', it is easier to achieve positive results at work. As a result, although it may appears that performance and achievements are determining opportunities, it is, in fact, the background influence of 'guanxi' playing a key role.

Second, improve HRM efficiency and vitality. Performance categories in the public sector are fuzzy and subjective (Yang, 2016), and individual performance does not directly affect promotions, salaries, or welfare benefits. Institutionalised reforms centred on supervision (Deng, 2018) have significantly reduced incentives in the Chinese public sector. The civil service elite has lost enthusiasm as pay transparency and restrictions, power lists, process requirements, and increased accountability and anti-corruption requirements have become more prevalent (He, 2000). The resulting low morale is a key challenge for TM.

Third, introduce strategic concepts. Strategic concepts have improved administrative efficiency in the public sector and have effectively overcome the issues associated with the traditional internal orientation of administration, focusing instead on the external environment (Poister and Streib, 1999). In terms of practical significance, strategic management provides a framework for the public sector to think and act (Johnsen, 2015). Favoreu et al. (2016) analysed three types of strategic approach: rational, political, and collaborative. In practice, it was believed that strategic concepts in Chinese public sectors are inflexible and therefore too slow to respond to rapid changes and turbulent external circumstances, the organisational objectives of the public sector are vague and strategic considerations meaningless, and centralised political control creates difficulties at the level of implementation. These points were ,to some extent, substantiated by Heilmann (2008) from the perspective of policy experimentation.

Fourth, balance political power with professional development. The Chinese government is constantly seeking a balance between administrative power and professional development. As a result, public sectors and systems still face a long-term dilemma in terms of achieving the best compromise (Tao-chiu and Chan, 1996). For the foreseeable future, China will continue to rely on the centralised and unified leadership of the CCP to implement comprehensive reforms. The extent to which a highly politicised administrative system can reconcile two different sets of values and meet the requirements of the global economy for transparency,

efficiency and compliance with rules will determine the possibilities of TM.

Fifth, promote public involvement. Building public service-oriented government and realising more public involvement or socialisation is a key goal in Chinese public sectors (Knox and Qun, 2007). Chinese citizens trust their government more than those in western countries (Steinhardt, 2012). While such high levels of trust may largely stem from traditional respect for authority, research shows that information disclosure and public participation can enhance citizens' trust (Wang and Niu, 2020). Therefore, more social organisations have been given the opportunity to cooperate with the government in social affairs governance, which gives TM a wider remit and a higher purpose.

2.4 The Chinese University Context

2.4.1 General Information and Organisational Structure

The majority of Chinese universities are state-owned institutions, which are subject to relatively strict personnel, funding, and staffing restrictions. The number of universities in China increased from 1,041 in 2000 to 2,596 in 2016, including 1,237 universities offering undergraduate education and 2,404,800 faculty and staff (China Statistical Yearbook, 2017). Universities in China are the main source of foundational and into cutting-edge research, and they have the largest contingent of researchers with high education levels. By the end of 2016, university R&D personnel had reached 360,000, accounting for 9.3 percent of China's total R&D personnel, of which 29.1 percent are PhDs, and they contribute more than 60% of the country's research. The above data is taken from the China Science and Technology Talent Development Report (2016) released by the Ministry of Science and Technology of China.

It is the policy of the Chinese government to allocate financial resources to universities (Lou and Wang, 2008). Regardless of the direction in which society develops, the core task of universities is to spread knowledge and cultivate talents (Yang & Li, 2016). Contemporary Chinese universities, whether directly associated with the Ministry of Education or provincial and municipal education departments and bureaus, or directly associated with the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and other ministries, are essentially subordinate units of administrative departments (Pearce and Pearce, 2001). As the administrative organ that dominates the development direction of universities, the government is responsible for

controlling the key adjustments of universities in different periods of time (Ge, 2015).

The internal management system of Chinese universities is under the Party's committee at the university level, which is governed by applicable regulations (Liu, 2020). Aside from ensuring that the Party ultimately has authority over the university, these regulations also guarantee that the party committee can comprehend the overall situation in school reform and development, as well as its ideological and political leadership. In addition, the Party is empowered to make decisions on major issues and oversee the implementation of major resolutions. At the same time, the regulations guarantee that principals and other administrative leaders can fully mobilise their enthusiasm and initiative (Walker, Hu and Qian, 2012). In summary, the system is based more on political considerations than on operational principles.

In terms of the institutional organisation of universities in China, the secretary of the Party committee and the president of the university exercise double leadership. Under the party secretary and president of the university, the deputy secretary and vice-president are set up to form a higher management organisation at the university level (Liu, Wang and Liang, 2019). Then, middle-level management organisations are set up, such as HR- departments, academic affairs department, science and technology department, finance department etc., as well as a number of secondary colleges (Schools) which undertake teaching and scientific research tasks. Additionally, the colleges have deans, associate deans, and party branch secretaries (Hayhoe, 2004).

The organisational structure of universities in China has a two-dimensional structure of academic power and administrative power, and the core management functions of universities have gradually evolved into a combination of party, institution, government and committee (Ge, 2015). University committees include academic committees and degree committees etc., and are composed of representatives from various departments, which reflect the particular scientific research and teaching functions of the university (Mohrman et al.,2011). This system also distinguishes the university from other government agencies and institutions. In addition, the university is a professional academic organisation composed of highly knowledgeable people. Its primary task is to spread knowledge, conduct academic research and serve society. In the university, senior figures have a high status and are expected

to have strong academic identities (Luo and Qin, 2012). Accordingly, each university creates corresponding academic organisations based on the particularities of its concrete situation. Such academic organisations include labs and research centres.

Almost all Chinese universities have largely the same organisational structure (See Figure 2.1). While organisational titles may differ, they are nonetheless based on similar functions, natures, or content. In general, there are four main types of institutions or departments in Chinese universities: first, the party-mass organisations, which are responsible for political construction, ideological construction, organisational construction and system construction within universities; second, the administrative organisation, which is mainly responsible for the management of the daily affairs, such as asset management, infrastructure and logistical support, etc.; third, subsidiary units, including museums, research institutes, and affiliated centers; fourth, schools/colleges, that is, departments established based on specific major disciplines.
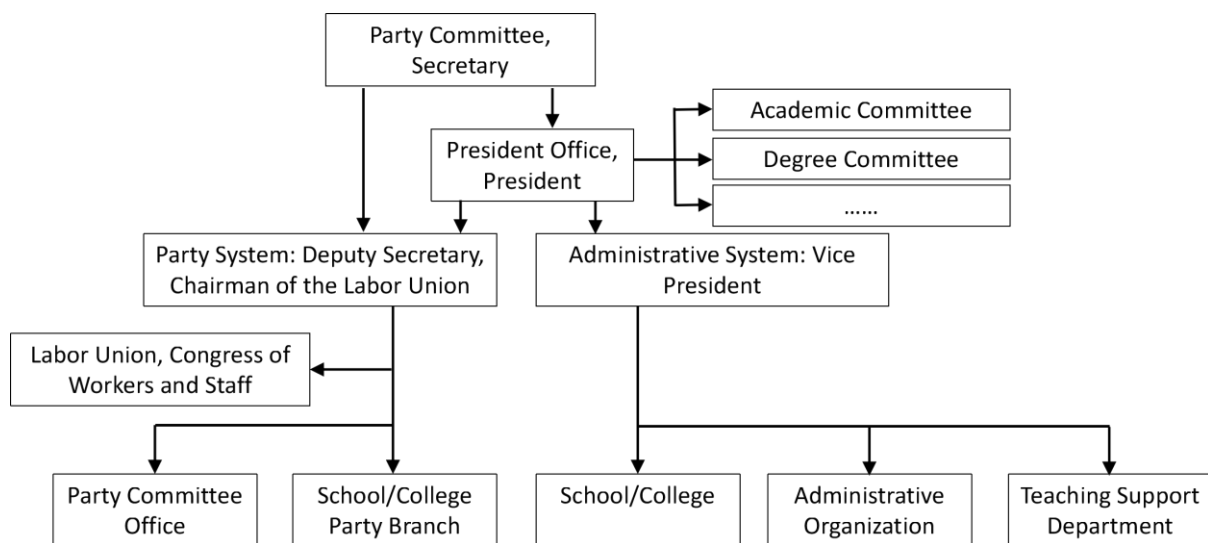
Figure2.1 The Organisational Structure of Chinese Universities

The primary manifestation of political embeddedness is the most fundamental feature of the socialist higher education management system with Chinese characteristics, that is, the system of presidential responsibility under the leadership of the Party's committee at universities (Liu, Wang and Liang, 2019). This system fundamentally ensures the recognition of socialism and follows the fundamental requirement of the Party being responsible for talents. Overall, China implements a highly centralised administrative system. The most

significant consequence of this system, when applied to the management of universities, is the embedding of various institutional cultures (Pearce and Pearce, 2001).

Generally, universities' structures are quite close to those of the government, and the government regards universities as a "quasi-government" organisations (Fang, 2018). From the perspective of economic sociology, political embedding is undertaken with a view to distributing power between the government and other social classes through economic policies. Hence, it is crucial to manage Chinese universities according to institutional norms, which include defining the internal management system, the scope of institutional authority and responsibilities, laws and regulations, and the form of institutional regulation (Yang & Li, 2016).

The government has presided over the allocation of university resources for an extended period of time, and given the pressure of resources, universities will 'rationally' converge with the government in all aspects (Xuan, 2014). Each Chinese university department has a clear hierarchy, a clear division of labour, and clear job responsibilities that are determined by clear regulations and norms, much like government departments. For example, the construction of subject teams is managed by the Human Resource Department, scientific research is managed by the Institute of Science and Technology, and student training is managed by the Academic Affairs Office, Graduate School and Academic Degrees Office. At the departmental management level, undergraduate and graduate students have their own vice presidents and teaching secretaries in charge of teaching and educational administration, each subject teaching team has subject leaders, and cultural construction departments have a party secretary and youth league secretary (Ge, 2016). Within this framework, the rights and responsibilities of all individuals are clearly defined, and most are prescribed (Liao, 2012).

Regardless of the system or the distribution of responsibilities and powers in Chinese universities, for all tasks, from decision-making at the school level to applying for documents, there are strict rules and regulations, which have distinct impersonal characteristics. These rules and regulations determine the sequence of events, the procedures to be followed, and the certificates to obtain (Huang, 2017). The discipline system alone includes discipline setting and division system, the education system of the discipline, discipline the reward and punishment system of the discipline, the discipline's periodical system, the academic

exchange system, the personnel training system, the position (title) evaluation (appointment) system, the intellectual property system, the achievement release system, and the fund-raising system, etc (Qi, 2016; Liao, 2018). As a form of knowledge production, these systems control resources and power with other organisations and academic communities through exclusion, and the developmental direction of disciplines is influenced by the direction of resources. Moreover, this is a means for government or administrative forces to regulate and control, reflecting the impersonal nature of university organisation and the deepening of political embedding. In a word, various characteristics of the university, such as institutionalisation, impersonality and distinct levels, not only reflect the role of bureaucracy in the organisational structure of universities, but are also the result of the deep embedding of politics in the organisation (Liu & Tian, 2017).

For most Chinese universities, educational resources can be divided into tangible and intangible educational resources, as illustrated in Figure 2.2.
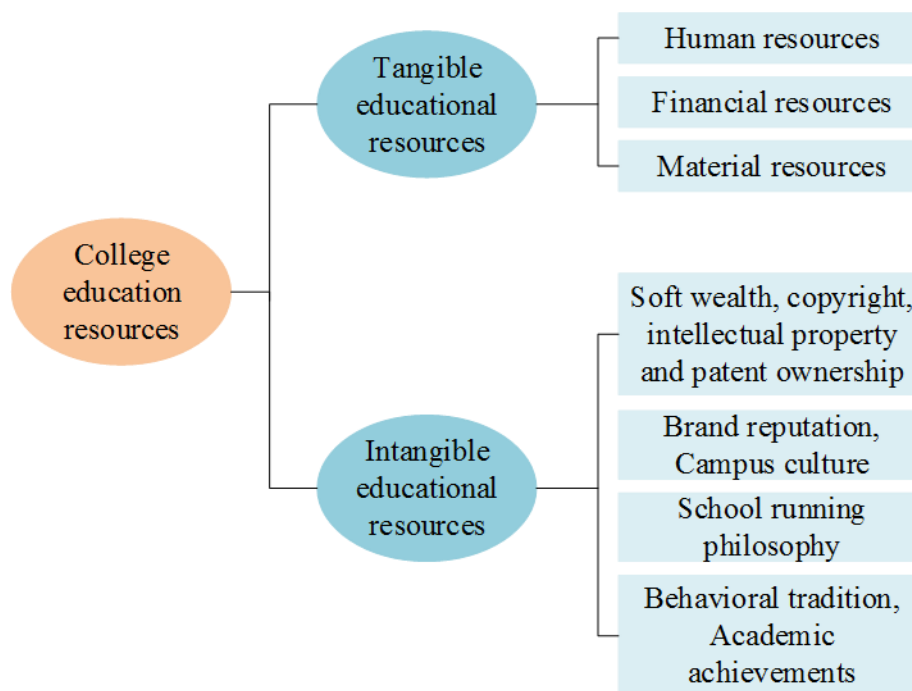
Figure 2.2 Classification of educational resources in Chinese universities

The rational allocation of teachers in higher education not only helps to improve the quality of teaching at universities, but also contributes to the development of higher education (Liu, 2015). The categorization of teachers' resources follows the framework proposed in an

analysis utilizing survey data from the National University Teacher Development Center by Chen (2022), distinguishing between soft structure and hard structure. In his survey, the soft structure refers to the intangible or non-physical aspects related to the development and enhancement of teachers' knowledge, skills, and abilities, and it focus on improving the professional capabilities of teachers, fostering a culture of lifelong learning, and enhancing their effectiveness in the educational setting; for example, it might include professional development programs, training workshops, mentoring and coaching initiatives, continuous learning opportunities, and career advancement strategies are part of the soft structure. The hard structure involves the tangible or physical components that support the overall infrastructure and organisation of the teaching profession, and it helps provide the organisational framework and support systems that shape the teaching profession, ensuring quality standards, accountability, and the overall structure of the teaching workforce; for example, certification processes, recruitment and selection procedures, performance evaluations, salary structures, title system and administrative policies might be included.

2.4.2 Double First-class Strategy

The implementation of the double first-class strategy, which refers to the development of first-class universities and first-class disciplines, is crucial for understanding the development of Chinese universities. In September 2017, the Ministry of Education of China released a list of first-class universities and disciplines globally, including 42 first-class universities and 95 universities with first-class disciplines, which represents the start of the double first-class strategy (Liu, 2018). It emphasises the importance of developing a first-class faculty talent pool. Under the guidance of the double first-class strategy, local governments issued corresponding supporting policies (Li and Xue, 2021). The question of how this opportunity can be seized has become a major challenge for every university in China.

In the face of the challenges of double first-class policy implementation, the academic community has begun to explore related challenges based on different perspectives and search for corresponding solutions. Li et al. (2022) highlighted the complexity of this challenge, noting that how the policy should be implemented is unclear because of the vague language with which it was formulated

Almost all universities in China have responded to this national strategy. However, among

these responses, there is a severe tendency for utilitarianism, excessive dependence on external policy, and responses that deviate from the logical starting point of the policy (Jiang et al., 2019). Many universities focus only on first-class research indicators and ranking indicators, while ignoring the value and results of their research (Wang, 2020). Due to the low visibility of indicators or lack of direct correlation with ranking, meeting diverse student needs, improving teaching quality and emphasising social service are ignored in the practical realisation of the double first-class strategy (Cui, 2018). In addition, due to the difficulty of receiving the policy dividend, some universities are less eager to participate in the double-first-class policy. In other words, although the double-first-class strategy targets all universities, the construction target and object are necessarily first-class rather than 'non-first-class'. Thus, universities will be discouraged from participating in the double first-class strategy if they lack funds, development opportunities, infrastructure, etc.

2.5 Conclusion

China is the world's most populous nation and has the world's second-largest GDP. Therefore, to some extent, China's TM issues are also global concerns. It is important to emphasise that China's TM practice is worthy of academic attention, and that Chinese practices and perspectives on TM must be shared with the world. This is the original intention of this study and the significance of this chapter.

Contemporary research into TM originated in the West (Chambers, 1998), and its theory therefore needs to be localised in an economic and social development environment with Chinese characteristics. As a major source of international immigrants, rather than a destination country for global migrants (Pieke, 2012), China is facing challenges such as insufficiently competitive international talents, unbalanced development of regional talents, and an immature talent development system, which restricts the development of strategic TM to some extent.

In terms of site and region, China, as a country with a large population and an active economy, has complicated national conditions. Unbalanced regional development is China's most fundamental challenge, and is one which, in turn, leads to regional talent accumulation and shortages, as well as differences in talent policies. Both the east-west gap and the north-south

gap exert a significant influence, resulting in different practices of TM in different regions. For this reason, this paper analyses two universities in entirely different regions in order to better understand the problems associated with the implementation of TM in Chinese universities.

With its demographic dividend gradually fading, China is pursuing a talent dividend. As a result of aging populations, low birth rates, and other factors, demographic structural changes have significantly marked the Chinese context. As a result, there are many challenges associated with implementing TM for the next generation of employees, who have unique characteristics. A second challenge is to continue to create value for older talents as China enters its aging development stage. In addition, China's demographic dividend has weakened, and as a result, the development of a talent dividend and the rational use TM represent further challenges. Furthermore, talent mobility has brought new challenges to retaining and attracting talent. Due to the innovation and development of digital and economic globalisation, talent flow patterns have changed profoundly; talent moves across borders, across regions, across industries, and across systems (Saxenian, 2002). Moreover, approaches to human resources have gradually changed. In addition, there is a tendency for employees to focus on self-development, and they may seek individuals who have a group consciousness; in other words, they may prioritise searching for individuals with whom they can work cooperatively (Qiu, Xu and Bhatt, 2021).

Understanding China's institutional logic and national TM strategy enables the Chinese context of this study to be better understood. The Communist Party of China is the ruling party and is expected to continue to govern in the long term. The basic principle for the implementation of TM in China is under the Party leadership, with a focus on macro policies rather than operational work, promoting talent ecology and services, and guiding all TM decisions. 'Strengthening the Nation with Talent' is a long-term national talent strategy that emphasises completing national modernisation through talent support. Its primary goal is the construction of world-class talent pools with a focus on more open talent policies. It aims to enhance talent development by implementing more active, open, and effective talent attraction, and making good use of global talent resources. The strategy also emphasises the strategic role of talent in leading development. All TM efforts and research in China revolve around these two strategic focuses, and their interpretation is crucial for understanding the research background for the study of TM in Chinese universities.

Implementing TM in China is a complex process, and there are several contextual challenges that organisations may face:

- First. Challenges posed by Culture. China's distinct social environment and culture necessitates a different approach to TM implementation. This is crucial if culture shock is to be avoided. Managing both overseas Chinese employees and foreign employees in a cross-cultural manner is also a critical challenge for TM.

- Second. Challenges posed by technological progress. The wide use of the Internet has fundamentally changed traditional ways of working. In addition, the application of big data brings great challenges to TM in terms of the quantatites of data availabale and associated issues with data security and sharing. In addition, artificial intelligence also requires new strategic TM to match the digital world.

- Third. Challenges posed by the development of the sharing economy. A new sharing 'platform + individuals' model has been developed in China. As a consequence, TM faces particular challenges in terms of attracting, retaining, developing and both internal and external employees.

- Fourth. Challenges posed by changes in organisational form. Organisational change inevitably affects the personnel within the organisation. Talent is now global, virtual and flexible. The main challenges faced by organisations are deauthorisation and decentralisation; more organisations are now managed in a flexible and project-based manner – in other words, in a collaborative manner – and they are more likely to be managed through platforms and networking (Sun, 2018).

Reviewing China's economy, politics, society and system design, as well as the basic structure of universities, enables the pattern and environmental background of talent management to be understood, which in turn enables stronger theoretical interpretation and logical argumentation.

Due to the fact that most Chinese universities are public institutions, the context of the public sector was also analysed in this study. Chinese universities are strictly organised and TM systems, such as the Bianzhi system, are used in employment relationships. According to this

study, TM implementation in the Chinese public sector faces five challenges because of its unique context:

- First, identify and develop talents with public service competence and passion.

- Second, improve HRM efficiency and vitality.

- Third, introduce strategic concepts.

- Fourth, balance political power with professional development.

- Fifth, promote public involvement.

Finally, this chapter discussed the context of Chinese university. The majority of Chinese universities are state-owned institutions, and they are under the leadership of the Party. In the institutional organisation of universities in China, the secretary of the Party committee and the president of the university exercise double leadership. In universities, there is a dual organisational structure of academic power and administrative power, as well as a combination of party, institution, government, and committee management. As resources tighten, universities will eventually be compelled to converge with governments in all aspects, including how they organise themselves.

The double first-class strategy, which involves developing first-class universities and first-class disciplines, determines the development of Chinese universities. The majority of universities have embraced this national strategy, but in many cases, they have done so from a utilitarian perspective. In the following chapters, the TM problems faced by Chinese universities as a result of the double first-class strategy will be discussed in detail.

Chapter 3 Literature Review – Talent Management in Theory

3.1 Introduction

TM is an ambitious and comprehensive topic. Accordingly, this chapter reviews its trajectory, concepts, architectures, and development in relation to a specific field, namely universities. Most importantly, the chapter explains the current research gaps within the existing TM literature.

The theoretical basis of this thesis is described in Section 3.2, which involves three theories: Human Capital Theory and Resource-based View Theory (RBV). The elaboration of each theory consists of a unified written logic of what the theory is, how it is applied in the Chinese context, and how it relates to TM research. In so doing, the theoretical basis can be fully elucidated, the applicability of this theory to the Chinese context can be validated, and the relationship between each theory to this thesis can be shown. Section 3.3 provides a brief overview of the history of TM and its development from a new concept to its current state. Section 3.4 defines the terms 'talent' and 'talent management'. In the process of defining these terms, this study adopts the same writing logic, that is, separately expounding how this definition is understood in the Chinese context so as to more accurately show the cognitive differences and provide a better definition for this study. Section 3.5 combines and classifies relevant studies in order to present an overall picture of the existing TM literature. In order to more accurately comprehend the current status of TM research, this study used CiteSpace to analyse annual and highly-cited articles. This enabled me to glean the research development and trend in this field through the statistics of the number of articles published in SSCI journals, identify the research themes and contents of highly-cited articles, discover the most prominent academics in the field, and clarify the research trends. Section 3.6 presents TM architectures in order to explain the TM system and of what it consists. In Section 3.7, the development of TM in the university field is presented from four aspects: talent identification, talent attraction, talent retention, and talent development. The Chinese context is also distinguished in order to explore the research gaps and conduct comparative studies. Finally, Section 3.8 summarises the main points and concludes the chapter.

3.2 Theoretical Grounding

The theoretical grounding of this research is crucial for understanding the principles, objectives, and implementation strategies within organisations. The following theoretical perspectives contribute to the conceptual foundation of TM. Human capital theory (HCT) posits that individuals' skills, knowledge, and capabilities are valuable assets that contribute to organisational success. In the context of TM, it emphasizes investing in the development of employees to enhance their skills and create a more valuable workforce (McLean & Kuo, 2014). Resource-Based View (RBV) focuses on the internal resources and capabilities of organisations. TM, from an RBV perspective, considers talent as a valuable resource that can provide a competitive advantage. Managing talent strategically is seen as essential for sustained organisational success.

In this research HCT is used to (a) understand how individuals, organisations, or governments invest in talent development, and it includes studying the relationship between educational attainment, skill development, and workforce productivity, etc.; (b) inform policy analysis by providing insights into the impact of education and talent development policies; (c) serve as a framework for understanding TM and its contribution. And RBV is used to (a) identify and classify the key resources and capabilities of case university, involves their competitive advantages; (b) help analysing competitive advantage; (c) serve as a theoretical framework to analyse and understand how the case universities achieve and sustain a competitive advantage through TM.

3.2.1 Human Capital Theory

(1) An Introduction to Human Capital Theory (HCT)

Schultz's (1961) macro system of human resource theory is best represented in his book, *Investment in Human Capital*, in which human knowledge and skills play a direct and decisive role in economic development due to their being special forms of capital. Several factors have been identified as contributing to the development of human resources, such as education, healthcare, and population mobility. Furthermore, he contributed significantly to the theory of human capital by introducing the concept of Economics of Population Quality, which holds that investment in improving population quality is essential to the promotion of economic

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prosperity and the improvement of the welfare of the poor. Becker (1962) systematically strengthened HCT from the perspective of microeconomics by conducting a systematic analysis of the income effect and return rate of human capital investment. He also examined human capital investment at various stages of the life cycle through conceptualising a novel equilibrium condition for human capital investment based on its tracking and analysis. In light of this, it is evident that the amount of time invested in human capital decreases with increasing age. There has been a gradual shift in the emphasis of positivism from the 1970s to the present day, and the use of empirical data has become an important tool with which to quantitatively explore the theory and practice of human capital. For instance, human capital has been included as an independent endogenous variable in several growth models (Romer, 1989; Lucas, 1990). In addition, human capital investment is important to economic development (Simon, 2019).

(2) Application of Human Capital Theory in the Chinese Context

First, HCT provides theoretical support for Chinese labour market research by providing a theoretical basis from which to understand the improvement of population quality, labour flow, and human capital allocation (Xie & Gao, 2004). Academics have studied family educational expectations, educational participation behaviour, and educational investment starting with the factors that affect human capital investment (Gu & Yang, 2013; Cui et al., 2019). Moreover, the theory provides perspectives for improving the quality of human capital. Furthermore, the theory of human capital plays an enlightening role in understanding the contribution of these changes to economic growth. Therefore, a large number of studies have used the theory to study the relationship between the human capital level of floating populations, and labour productivity and employment opportunities, and explained the above problems in detail (Knight et al., 2011; Xie, 2012).

Second, HCT provides analytical methods and tools for the study of the Chinese labour market. Scholars have conducted a series of empirical studies related to China's labour market, forming a number of application fields, such as the expansion of human capital and education production, and gender differences within human capital investment (Yu, 2014; Wang et al., 2010).

Third, HCT provides a new perspective from which to study the Chinese labour market. The rapid expansion of education has greatly improved the level of human capital in China and changed the structure of human capital on the labour market. Moreover, the country has witnessed an increasing number of highly-skilled and knowledgeable talents, which has promoted the rises in both income share and salary levels of low-income people (Lai & Meng, 2005). Research on the relationship between marginal income and human capital investment in the early life cycle has led scholars to realise the importance of education investment in this stage. In particular, the cultivation of non-cognitive abilities has been identified as key to human capital investment (Heckman & Rubinstein, 2001).

HCT also solves many practical problems, such as ① income distribution. Indeed, the theory has provided China with a new notion for increasing the income of labourers by improving the level of education, and has outlined an ideological basis for enhancing the awareness of education of labourers and promoting education reform (Lai, 1998). ② Employment. Using HCT, the allocation ability of workers influences their efficiency, and other viewpoints can provide a new perspective for understanding China's employment issues (Lai & Ji, 2015). In addition, the academic circle has also expanded the scope of research in that 'knowledge unemployment', 'over education', and other issues have received increasing attention so as to not only identify the reasons behind the structure of the labour market, but also to reflect on the higher education system and its quality. This attention has helped further the connections and interactions between education and the labour market (Li & Zhang, 2003). ③ The theory has helped disentangle other practical issues related to the allocation and segmentation of labour (Ma et al., 2017; Guo & Ding, 2005).

Many studies have centred on human capital in enterprises, with varying results. Yu (2018) conducted a bibliometric analysis on human capital investment and predicted the direction of future research. A majority of these studies are quantitative in nature. For example, Xu and Quan (2018) selected 32 enterprises as a sample from which to construct a model. It has been recognised that employees in cultural enterprises have a positive impact on the growth of human capital due to the level of education and training they receive. Although senior executives' working years do not have a significant impact on their human capital growth, the salary incentive of managers negatively affects their human capital growth. On the basis of

the hypothesis that there is an interaction mechanism between innovation and human capital, Wang and Pan (2018) constructed a model to demonstrate that the accumulation of human capital and the level of innovation within an enterprise are strategic complements that can be used in conjunction.

(3) Human Capital Theory and TM

An important way to measure the effectiveness of TM is by assessing the level of human capital (Martin, 2015). Based on the development of HCT in the 20th century, and considering the trends of human development, it seems highly certain that economic expansion is bound to increasingly rely on humans (Cheese, Thomas and Craig, 2007), whether on the macro, meso, or micro levels. This is one of the reasons why human capital research continues to be a hot topic. There are still several production factors that must be considered in a model of economic development of human capital, including human capital, material capital, and technological progress (Yakushev and Filin, 2020). Particularly in terms of the promotion of human capital, it is important to fully take human needs into consideration (Sharipov, Krotenko and Dyakonova, 2021). As human capital investment is closely related to personal future income and a country's long-term development prospects, it is critical that human capital investment continues to be increased in order to promote the accumulation and endogenous growth of human capital (S. Wang *et al.*, 2022). The importance of human capital accumulation to both developed and developing countries (or regions) cannot be overstated (e.g., Alvarado et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2021).

TM seeks to enhance the value, efficiency, and efficacy of human capital (Crane and Hartwell, 2019). Accordingly, this necessitates the question: What can be done to ensure human capital is continuously appreciated? The purpose of various initiatives is to promote the appreciation of human capital, especially by eliminating various institutional or social obstacles to human capital appreciation and maximising the efficiency with which it can be utilised (Masri and Suliman, 2019; Alves *et al.*, 2020; Widarni, Bawono and nine, 2021). However, human capital's added value is also affected by a number of other social factors that play a role in TM, such as enterprises or organisations, which contribute high-quality resources and talents, actively develop management methods that meet the characteristics and needs of organisations, and actively promote talent development (e.g., Pauli & Pocztowski, 2019; Sakthi Ananthan et al.,

2019; Shet, 2020).

In light of the above, it drew the following conclusions:

First, HCT indicates that human capital is a potential source of competitive advantage, which is the basic hypothesis of this thesis.

Second, HCT has been widely used in China, which shows its applicability in the Chinese context.

Third, TM can be used to increase human capital.

3.2.2 Resource-based View Theory (RBV Theory)

(1) An Introduction to Resource-based View Theory

Resource-based View Theory (RBV) is considered one of the most important reorientation works in strategic research (Aragón-Correa & Sharma, 2003). In recent years, it has gradually developed as an emerging theoretical method with which to study the sustained competitive advantages and strategic management of organisations (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992). In order for companies to gain a sustainable competitive advantage and achieve excellence, they must possess valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-replaceable resources (Barney, 1991). Research in strategic management has predominantly focused on obtaining and maintaining competitive advantages (Oliver, 1997; Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997; Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson, 2019; Mahdi, Nassar and Almsafir, 2019). Indeed, Lippman and Rumelt (1982) suggested that an enterprise's competitive advantage is its unique resources that can be hard to imitate. Furthermore, a pioneering economic analysis of an enterprise strategy has been able to prove the inherent resources of an enterprise strategy can be used to generate Ricardian rent. Based on Wernerfelt's research (1984), scholars have attempted to explain how differences in internal resources contribute to the superior performance of an enterprise. Moreover, Rumelt (1987) explained that an enterprise may be homogeneous when it is new, but will gradually become different over time, thus meaning that the resources of each enterprise cannot be completely replicated. RBV focuses on an enterprise's acquisition and development of internal, rather than external, resources, and focuses on the assets, skills, abilities, and knowledge located within the organisation (Barney, 1991).

Following Wernerfelt (1984), Rumelt (1987), and Barney (1991), many subsequent works have extended RBV, including core competencies (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994), knowledge-based perspectives (Grant, 1996), and dynamic capabilities (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997). There has been a substantial contribution to strategic management knowledge through the RBV-related studies. Researchers have also focused on a variety of scare resources that produce competitive advantages, such as reaction delays (e.g., Dutta et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2005), conventions (e.g., Hoffman & Preble, 2003; Johnson-Hall & Hall, 2022; Zhang et al., 2020), business experience (e.g., Bhatt & Grover, 2005; Ying et al., 2019), organisational culture (e.g., Azeem et al., 2021; Fiol, 1991; Gürlek & Tuna, 2018; Sabuhari et al., 2020; etc.), intangible assets (e.g., Chen & Chang, 2013; Hall, 1993; Khan et al., 2019; Manikas et al., 2019), organisational learning (e.g., Andreu & Ciborra, 2009; Antunes & Pinheiro, 2020; Pratono et al., 2019), entrepreneurship (e.g., Hwang et al., 2020; Lestari et al., 2020; Teng, 2007), information resources (e.g., Kearns & Lederer, 2000; Powell & Dent-Micallef, 1997; Saeidi et al., 2019), human resources (e.g., Collins, 2021; Hamadamin & Atan, 2019; Schuler & MacMillan, 1984; Wright et al., 1994), and knowledge (e.g., Chuang, 2004; Haseeb et al., 2019; Karia, 2018; Wang et al., 2009).

(2) The Application of RBV in the Chinese Context

Many studies have linked the RBV and its core competencies to the Chinese context (Chou and Chang, 2004; Gu, Jiang and Wang, 2016; Shan *et al.*, 2019; Zameer, Wang and Yasmeen, 2020). Indeed, the role of core competitiveness has received unprecedented attention in the last four decades since China's reform and opening up period. Due to the impact of economic transformation and upgrading, Chinese enterprises have faced an urgent need to concretely and accurately understand the concept and mechanism of effectively strengthening their core competitiveness, which is built around their own resource bases (Chew, Yan and Cheah, 2008; Shan *et al.*, 2019).

In relation to studies on Chinese enterprises, three consistent aspects of the uniqueness of resources have been examined. First, regarding contextual features, China is the largest transition economy and emerging market in the world, rapidly increasing in market openness and economic growth (Tung, 1994; Li-Hua and Khalil, 2006; Warner, 2013). Second, in terms of institutional characteristics, China has a large number of enterprises and organisations with

either different or mixed ownership (Peng, Tan and Tong, 2004; Delios *et al.*, 2006; Ralston *et al.*, 2006; Li *et al.*, 2022; Lo, Gao and Lin, 2022). Although the country's enterprises have a tendence to rapidly develop and have strong business vitality (Child, 1996; Chen, 2006), many challenges stemming from corporate management (Ma *et al.*, 2022) have resulted in their having different characteristics than those of mature economies (Gamble, 2000; Lin and Germain, 2003; Guan, Yam and Mok, 2005; Ralston *et al.*, 2006). Third, concerning leadership characteristics, Chinese leadership is still in the incubation period of development, with the concepts of guanxi and familism playing a critical role in their success (Zhou, 2012; Burt and Burzynska, 2017). While most leaders may not have pedigree diplomas, they are highly adaptable, and have strong learning and innovation abilities (Malik, 1997; Huang *et al.*, 2022).

Moreover, the features of resources in China have a dual effect on forming and improving the core competitiveness of Chinese organisations. Some positive influences include China's global spread and attractiveness as a market for entry (Wang and Miao, 2016), as well as the ease with which motivation for development can be generated and maintained during the country's economic rise (Whitfield and Therkildsen, 2011). However, the challenges cannot be ignored. First, it is a challenge for Chinese enterprises to transform development motivation into core competitiveness (Deng, 2007). Second, Chinese companies face enormous obstacles in choosing between long- and short-term benefits, and effectively building core competitiveness and completing strategic commitment through resource utilisation and sustained investment (Wang *et al.*, 2017; Xu and Tan, 2020). Third, it is easy for Chinese enterprises to deviate from the market because of the influence of government policies in decision making (Child and Yuan, 1996). Therefore, the development of Chinese enterprises and organisations needs to effectively cope with the features of resources.

(3) RBV and TM

RBV theory closely links the analysis of competitive advantage and performance of enterprises with resources (Ma, 2000; Lindelöf and Löfsten, 2004), establishes a set of resource-based analysis methods (Rouse and Daellenbach, 1999), and extends them to the analysis of enterprise theory, in which talent resources are of critical importance (Rabbi et al., 2015). Having come from a knowledge economy and global economy background, Wright et al. (1994, 2001) developed a strategic human resources management model based upon RBV,

highlighted the integration of static resources and dynamic management, and systematically examined the efficacy of using human capital management to acquire and maintain competitive advantages. Barney and Wright (1998) examined the role that human resources play in the development of sustainable competitive advantages by applying the value, rarity, imitability, and organisation (VRIO) framework, and discussed which aspects of a firm's human resources can contribute to sustainable competitive advantage. They believed that talents are viewed as VRIO resources, because talents are valuable, rare, inimitable, organisational, and non-substitutable. Within strategic human resource management, it could be argued that RBV provides an essential theoretical basis for understanding a variety of issues (Colbert, 2004).

Intellectual capital (Youndt and Snell, 2004) and knowledge management (Bolisani and Bratianu, 2018) bridge the gap between human resource management and strategic management. The implementation of knowledge-based HRM practices is associated with higher innovation performance by improving a firm's intellectual capital (Kianto, Sáenz and Aramburu, 2017), and is one of the most effective means of increasing and maintaining the stock of intellectual capital (Rodriguez Perez and Ordóñez de Pablos, 2003). It could also be argued that the new reality of competitiveness lies in knowledge management and intellectual capital (Rastogi, 2000), wherein a dynamic nexus forms a link with HRM systems, intellectual capital, knowledge management, and core competence.

The following processes that are supported by TM contribute to the core competitiveness of enterprises.

First, through the stock of intellectual capital (related to the knowledge, skills, and abilities of talents, etc.), social capital (related to the valuable relationships between people), and organisational capital (related to organisational processes and procedures), a company can integrate talents and systems in order to drastically increase their performance and competitive advantage (Subramaniam and Youndt, 2005).

Second, several processes form part of knowledge management, such as the creation, transformation, and integration of knowledge. Through this approach, enterprises are able to maintain and improve their stock of intellectual capital, thereby supporting their core

competitiveness (Rastogi, 2000). A hierarchical and classified TM system facilitates the efficient integration, transformation, and innovation of knowledge, resulting in an improvement of an organisation's core competitiveness (Khan, 2019).

Third, by integrating, reorganising, acquiring, and withdrawing resources, enterprises use dynamic capabilities to match, or even lead, market changes (Zahra, Sapienza and Davidsson, 2006). Moreover, by developing dynamic capabilities, companies can update their core competitiveness to adapt to market changes in line with alterations to the flow of intellectual capital stock and knowledge (Thanh Nhon *et al.*, 2020).

In relation to individual employees, RBV could be used to ensure that leaders are made responsible for helping organisations use their resources more effectively than their competitors (Connor, 2002). RBV can also help employees understand their own cognitive processes and own advantages, which can contribute to an organisation, gain knowledge and skills that provide a competitive edge, and train their employees in fields that will enhance the value of the organisation. Moreover, talents must not only have resources that are valuable to the organisation, but must also ensure that the organisation is aware of these available resources. Practically speaking, talents can continuously demonstrate their value to an organisation in a variety of ways, such as through their task performance.

In sum:

> RBV provides a more comprehensive understanding of the sources of sustainable competitive advantages and the strategies with which to achieve them. Organisations can attain these advantages through the control of valuable, scarce, irreplaceable, and difficult to replicate resources (i.e., talent).

> According to RBV, China's particularity has not only contributed to the success of Chinese organisations, but also posed many challenges. Strategic managers are faced with great challenges to effectively build core competitiveness.

> TM promotes competitiveness in core area. This research, guided by RBV, focuses on the inside of the black box of organisations, and considers the university to be a collection of talent resources and capabilities. Accordingly, its core theme is the

discovery of why organisations are different, as well as how competitive advantages can be obtained and maintained. In order to obtain core competitiveness, this research argues that the TM system must be implemented and continually optimised.

3.3 The Origins of Talent Management

Both TM and HRM are important functions within an organisation (van den Brink et al., 2013). While there is some overlap between the two, differences also exist (Iles, Chuai and Preece, 2010; Swailes, Downs and Orr, 2014). For example, TM is typically more strategic (Lewis and Heckman, 2006), with an emphasis on long-term strategy and development (Stahl *et al.*, 2012), whereas HRM is more tactical, with a focus on implementing and managing specific HR programmes and initiatives (Schuler, 1992). Different from traditional HRM, TM, as a new concept and strategic thought, has attracted the interest of many organisations and researchers around the world in the past two decades (Scullion & Collings, 2010). From practice to theory, TM has gradually become the main topic of debate within the relevant mainstream literature (Dries, 2013; McDonnell *et al.*, 2017). Figure 3.1 shows the number of all TM articles in the Web of Science (WOS) Core Collection, developed by Thomson Reuters Company, between 1900 to May 2020. There are 1,200 articles in total, and the upward trend reflects the growing attention that TM continues to receive, thus reflecting its great development and promising future.
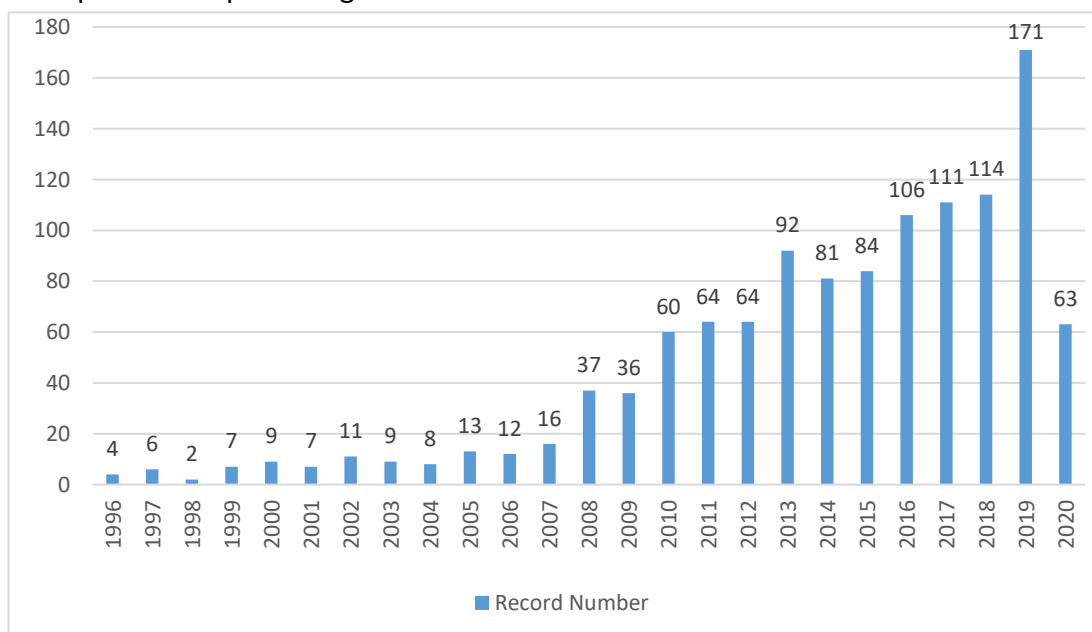
Figure 3.1 The number of all TM articles in the WOS database from 1990–2020 (May)

Since Chambers (1998) investigated 77 US companies in different industries, and proposed the notion of the 'the war for talents', the global competition for talents has pushed every organisation to remain aware of the benefits of talent flows and the serious consequences of talent shortages. TM is of the utmost importance for an organisations to establish advantages in increasingly competitive markets (Clake and Winkler, 2006). The development of the global market and the emergence of new technologies have brought great changes in enterprise management concepts, methods, and tools, and the demand for skilled talent has increased significantly worldwide (Kerr *et al.*, 2016). Compared to other forms of capital, the human variety has taken a leading position. Accordingly, practitioners and academics have sought to demonstrate TM as a source of competitive advantage and the key to success at every stage of development within numerous fields (e.g., Dries, 2013; Kravariti & Johnston, 2020; Swailes, 2013; Whysall et al., 2019; Atrizka et al., 2020). Indeed, in their paper (the most cited in the field), 'Strategic Talent Management: A Review and Research Agenda', Collings and Mellahi (2009) appealed to the academic community to explore TM and developed a theoretical model of strategic TM.

This is often the starting point for all research within the field and provides a context for further elaboration of the increasing difficulties of talent attraction and retention (e.g., Beechler & Woodward, 2009; McDonnell et al., 2017; Tarique & Schuler, 2010; etc.). In order to adapt to the needs of enterprise development, TM is constantly changing and innovating. Amidst technological advances, new practical contributions, and academic debates, TM has been afforded ample opportunities to develop, and relevant research has blossomed (Collings, Mellahi and Cascio, 2017).

Plateauing organisational hierarchies and networked management structures have made organisation more flexible, agile, and faster to respond, and have brought expansive development space and vigorous vitality (Chandratreya and Sajanapwar, 2013; Cappelli and Keller, 2014; Harsch and Festing, 2020). The traditional six-functional-module of HRM has hit something of a bottleneck in that it has been difficult to adapt to the role positioning of talents, their personalised needs, and the diversity of their values (Iles, Chuai and Preece, 2010; Sarmad *et al.*, 2013; Jyoti, 2014). Moreover, a case study of Chinese multinational companies confirmed the traditional HRM model is neither recognised by leadership nor employees (Chuai, Preece and Iles, 2008).

In addition, the cooperation method of departmentalisation is undergoing changes. Team-based cooperation, such as strategic business units (SBU), is slipping into the mainstream, and greater attention is being paid to new forms of teamwork instead of hierarchical authority, which has changed the methods of talent motivation and TM (Tarique and Schuler, 2010; Vaiman and Collings, 2013). Vison-driven management and big data analytics appears to motivate talents to create values through the identification of cultural values, instead of traditional simple instructions and institution systems (Oltra and Vivas-López, 2013). Talents are gathered, engaged, and empowered under a common vision, strategy, and culture gained not only from substantial professional growth, but also from the increased capacity for mentoring others, and TM is promoted from this development mode (Smith *et al.*, 2019).

A system that attracts and maximises the value of talent is urgently needed. Indeed, research on the value (Makram et al., 2017; Sparrow & Makram, 2015) and contribution (Collings, 2014; Narayanan et al., 2019) of TM describes talent as increasing from its initial point to gradually form a healthy competition and a perfect talent pool. Accordingly, organisations should be accurately oriented to practice TM (Meyers and van Woerkom, 2014; Thunnissen, 2016; Bolander, Werr and Asplund, 2017; Makram, Sparrow and Greasley, 2017), and discuss its effectiveness (Khoreva, Vaiman and Van Zalk, 2017; Ali, Bashir and Mehreen, 2019; King and Vaiman, 2019), impacts (Collings, 2014b; Anlesinya, Amponsah-Tawiah and Dartey-Baah, 2019; Kamel, 2019; Al Aina and Atan, 2020), and contexts (Tansley, Kirk and Tietze, 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen and Scullion, 2020; Shet, 2020).

While the concept of TM is becoming richer and more comprehensive, its development requires a certain period of accumulation, listed in the following:

(1) TM is a growing field; its formation and development require ample time. In the 1980s and 1990s, the intellectual roots of TM emerged in the fields of HRM and HR planning (Vaiman et al., 2013). As TM research is still in its nascent stage (Collings & Mellahi, 2009), its boundaries have yet to be determined. There are unique stages and differences in the growth process of TM in different talent organisations with different fields, forms, and scales (e.g., Hassan et al., 2022; Kravariti et al., 2021). Leadership must be able to identify and lead during the process of its formation. Indeed, Mohamed Jais et al. (2021) proposed a framework of five clusters of leadership

competency skills, including personnel effectiveness, cognition, leading, impact and influence, and achievement and action.

(2) TM has a complex impact on organisational development (Kehinde, 2012). Due to its being a unified system, it is not possible to separate the implementation and operation of TM from the configuration and integration of its various components (Morris, Snell and Björkman, 2016). Its combination is directly related to the level of talent performance. A reasonable configuration will result in a positive impact. For example, Anlesinya and Amponsah-Tawiah (2020) argued that TM contributes to the sustainable development of an organisation. However, the impact of TM can also be risky and negative. For instance, De Boeck et al. (2018) found evidence for negative affective reactions in employees identified as talents. Additionally, organisations that are risk averse, such as family-owned firms, tend to invest less in TM when there is little competition in their industry (Basco *et al.*, 2021).

(3) TM itself is a dynamic process that is influenced by many factors, including such internal factors as capital, technology, management systems, and corporate cultures, and external factors, such as the social, economic, political, cultural, educational, and scientific and technological environments (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen and Scullion, 2020). These types of influences are especially complex in times of economic globalisation, since TM, enterprise development, and environmental change are all interconnected. As a dynamic effect field, it appears to be continually adapting to changes in the environment and organisational development, and thereby constantly meeting organisational demands for talent resources.

(4) In many ways, TM embodies and reflects an organisation's vision and strategy (Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Morris, Snell and Björkman, 2016). A company's business philosophy, objective system, value orientation, and vision must be clearly defined in order to bolster its survival, development, and competitiveness (Schoemaker, Heaton and Teece, 2018). In addition to helping enterprises integrate all departments into one goal, they can also provide a reference for its strategy and actions, and play an important role in guiding and controlling TM (Altındağ, Çirak and Acar, 2018). A company may have a different strategic plan, which is why the content and guidance

of TM may differ due to its content and structure. The objective of TM is to maintain alignment with an organisation's resource structure and development space, as well as to improve performance and explore new opportunities for the organisation's development (Cheese, Thomas and Craig, 2007; Waal, 2017).

(5) TM differs according to its particular context. Indeed, TM practices ought to be linked with organisational context (King, 2017), and can benefit from broader perspectives and a multilevel, multi-value approach (Thunnissen, Boselie and Fruytier, 2013b). There is a contradiction between diversity management and TM in terms of exclusion and inclusion. On the one hand, organisations promote exclusion through their TM architecture – which focuses on identifying and developing certain select employees. On the other, organisations promote inclusion in order to reduce existing inequalities for traditionally underrepresented groups (Daubner-Siva *et al.*, 2018).

In summary, from reviewing TM's origin, it can see how organisations' development strategies and objectives are associated with TM. This provides a more complete picture of TM. Moreover, TM acts as a support for the existence form of the organisation, and is designed to create a channel between the internal and external environment of human resources, thereby optimising factor combination and achieving high performance through their integration (Silzer and Dowell, 2009; Stahl *et al.*, 2012). In light of its increasingly important role, it seems likely that the TM system will continue to be optimised, upgraded, developed, and evolved. In so doing, TM can provide constant support to, and guarantee, an organisation's talent and intellectual requirements.

3.4 Understanding Talent Management

3.4.1 The Meaning of Talent

While earliest talent studies tended to focus on 'excellent people and their qualities', they largely related to various disciplines, including psychology, success studies, economics, sociology, and philosophy. Psychology research has tended to centre around intelligence, personality, self-concept, motivation, creativity, and other issues of talents (e.g., Feldhusen & Hoover, 1986; Gardner & Moran, 2006; Guilford, 1967; Kerr, 2009; Simonton, 2008). Success studies have largely focused on case studies of becoming talents (e.g., Allen, 2014; Guiying,

2000; Martinez, 2021; Hutton, 2008). Sociology research has mainly discussed the social conditions of talents and creativity, and the influence of social environment on talents has been the core content (Khoury, 1977; Abdullah, Ismail and Albani, 2018; Liu and Liu, 2021). The research from the perspective of economics has predominantly foregrounded human capital investment and economic returns (Chiu, 1998; Tungodden *et al.*, 2004; Boudreau and Ramstad, 2005; Qian, 2010), mostly adopting quantitative statistical research methods and models. Besides, philosophy research (and especially that of political and historical philosophy) has mainly focused on the relationship between politics, historical figures, and their roles in history and historical development, and the most famous achievements include 'the rise and fall of the elites' (Pareto, 1991), 'the power elite' (Mills, 2000), and 'the development of the monist view of history' (Plekhanov, 1956).

Freidrich Liazt (1936) divided national productivity into three levels: natural resources, social conditions, and spiritual forces. The first two levels pertain to the production of materials, while the highest level of productivity refers to the production of spiritual power, in which human capital plays an important role. Drucker (1954) argued that a company's resources include a broad range of items; however, the most important resource is its human capital, and losing its appeal to qualified, capable, and ambitious employees is the first sign that a company is going downhill. Dubrin (2010) exemplified the importance of finding and correctly using excellent talents. Waterman et al. (1994) proved that interest keeps people happy and results in long-term outstanding performance in the work.

Within human resource management, the concept of talent was rarely mentioned until the end of the 1990s, whereupon the word 'talent' began to appear with increasing frequency (Gallardo-Gallardo, 2018). With the popularity of the 'War for Talent', talent and TM have grown in recognition (Griffith, 2019). Practice and research in TM are centred around talent, which is the basic unit of the system. There will always be different needs, knowledge, skills, personalities, and behaviours that talents possess at different times. As a result of the environment and their own evolving characteristics, talents will also change themselves as well, which directly affects the function of TM (Zhao, 2019). Consequently, it is essential to first discuss the meaning of talent in order to more comprehensively understand TM itself. While a wealth of studies have discussed TM, 'talent management' lacks a consistent definition and clear conceptual boundaries (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Indeed, some of these

studies have focused on particular human resource practices, some on the needs of talents and position progression (Lewis and Heckman, 2006), and others on improving performance (Michaels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod, 2001). However, the majority of related studies first discussed how to define 'talents' in order to differentiate themselves from conventional human resource management research.

Using a philological approach in both historical and linguistic examples, Tansley (2011) analysed the word 'talent' and noted the variations in its use in other languages. According to him, there is no single or universal definition of 'talent' in any language. Similarly, Ross (2013) declared that there is no 'one size fits all' (pp.166) solution to the definition of talent. The term appears open to many complex, ambiguous, and incomplete interpretations. When organisations are able to understand this ambiguity, they are better able to identify any weaknesses in their approaches to correctly defining talent (Ross, 2013). Depending on the perspective of a particular organisation (Tansley, 2011), or on the time period (Ansar, 2018), talent can vary.

It has been generally accepted that talent has different meanings for different organisations, and is highly influenced by the work undertaken. It is imperative for organisations to have a common language when it comes to talent (Tansley, 2011). Moreover, Meyers et al. (2013) provided guidelines on how an organisation's TM system can be designed based on their respective talent definitions, which are of particular use to HR practitioners in the development of their TM systems. Many scholars have continued the development of TM as an independent research stream on this basis. For example, according to Collings and Mellah (2013), two important improvements can be made to Meyers et al.'s (2013) definition. In order to maximise value creation for organisations, it is important for them to focus their efforts on calibrating their required level of talent and to ensure its strategic development in order to most significantly enhance value creation. In addition, due to its importance, there must be an emphasis on context when translating talent into an organisation's performance.

Specifically, an individual's talent is viewed as a combination of abilities, which includes a multitude of intrinsic qualities, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgements, attitudes, behaviours, characteristics, and drives that make them unique in comparison to others (Dahshan, Keshk and Dorgham, 2018). A person's capability to learn and grow is also

included in this concept (Nafei, 2015). In the context of organisations, talent is referred to as the unique characteristics, qualities, traits, or abilities of individuals who use these traits to achieve the goals of the organisation (El Nakhla, 2013).

Talent can be defined as an individual's inherent ability to perform a particular task in a specific manner. A variety of terms are used to define talent, such as excellent abilities, key employees, high potentials (Ready, Conger and Hill, 2012), or those individuals especially able to provide a particular value to their organisation. Some studies have suggested that talents are the combination of such characteristics as strategic thinking, leadership, emotional maturity, and communication skills. (e.g., Bird, 2017; Garavan et al., 2012; Michaels et al., 2001). Nijs et al. (2014) believed that some talents systematically develop innate abilities and better performants than others. Moreover, talent entails a greater mastery of established abilities and systematic knowledge (Tansley, 2011). The most impactful definition of talent to this study is the combination of skills, competence, commitment, and contribution (Beechler and Woodward, 2009; Thunnissen and Arensbergen, 2015; Čizmić and Ahmić, 2021).

Furthermore, talent pools are composed of a variety of talents and high potentials (Stahl *et al.*, 2012). TM can include a variety of talent pools and classifications, and tend to be interconnected and have mutual influences, such as cooperation and competition (Boselie & Thunnissen, 2017).

The Concept of Talent in the Chinese Context

Within Chinese culture, talent has a long history, which can be traced back to ancient times. Wang Chong (27 AD–ca.97 AD) – an outstanding materialist philosopher in the Eastern Han Dynasty – was the first to utilise the concept of talent. In his book, *Lun Heng*, he made many famous arguments about the concept of talent, such as '*Ren Cai Gao Xia, Bu Neng Jun Tong* (人才高下，不能钧同)' which means talents are different and cannot be treated in the same way, and '*Cao Xing You Chang Xian, Shi Huan Wu Chang Yu* (操行有常贤，仕宦无常遇)', meaning that, while positions are impermanent, virtue must always be present. China has focused on the management of talent since its ancient past, which has evolved into an industry with a unique system of talent selection, training, utilisation, and motivation. Confucius promoted a 'people-oriented' concept, which holds that the ideal society cannot

be realised by the government, but rather by people themselves (Wei and Zhang, 2011). Mencius proposed the important view that people are the foundation of a country and a peaceful country depends on a strong foundation (He, 2022). Xunzi emphasised the importance of human beings in society, holding that people are the spirit of everything (Lee, 2005). While the philosophy of Chinese TM is rooted in the country's ancient culture (Brown, 2014; Higgins & Zheng, 2002), since modern times, the development of TM thought in China has been slow and its achievements have been somewhat limited. It was only during the reforms and opening up of the Chinese economy in the 1980s that Chinese scholars began to pay increasing attention to the study of TM (Fang, 2019). In 1979, Lei and Pu proposed that a science of talent should be established in order to understand its nature. Since the birth of TM as its own discipline, contemporary talent researchers have begun to further explore and investigate the concept of talent in a systematic and scientific way. Especially since the beginning of the 20th century, when the scientific view of talents was formally established in China, the concept of talent has experienced near-constant evolution (Wang, 2017).

The main perspectives in relation to the definition of talent can be summarised as follows:

(1) Considering the concept of talent as 'creative labour', 'greater contribution', or 'certain contribution'. Wang Tongxun (1985) defined a talent as someone who has contributed greatly to social development and human progress in a particular field, industry, or occupation. Ye et al. (1983) further suggested that talents are individuals who possess a certain specialised knowledge, advanced technological abilities and skills in a variety of social practice activities, and who make significant contributions through their own creative work to the understanding and transformation of nature and society, as well as the advancement of humankind. As Lei et al. (1979) asserted, the talent to be understood should be that which has made the greatest contributions to the understanding and transformation of nature and society, and to the progress of humanity through the use of creative energy. Gan's (1984) definition of talent refers to all those who have contributed to the well-being of human beings and society through creative labour and wisdom. Talent exists in a number of forms. Those who possess it might be either celebrated or unknown, and talent can be obvious or buried.

(2) Talent has been defined as the possession of certain wisdom, specialised knowledge,

experience, or skills. The concept of talent has been defined in a variety of ways by various scholars. China's most famous scholar, Qian Xuesen, provided a precise definition of talent: It is not a talent of genius, but a talent of the people, an individual with exceptional skills from all walks of life. Scholars often conceptualize talents as a form of talent capital, asserting that individuals characterised as talents can effectively harness their wisdom, skills, and knowledge, combining them with the outcomes of their creative pursuits (Hymer et al., 2008). Despite the presence of abundant knowledge, extraordinary wisdom, outstanding talent, and special skills, these will not contribute to the creation of value if they are not combined with work. Indeed, these attributes will remain as mere potential and stagnant manpower, not talents (Zhao, 2013).

(3) Talent is characterised by the strong will and skill capable of inspiring creativity. Some scholars have emphasised that talent differs from labour force. Talents are considered to be people with high intelligence and capable of creativity (Wu, 2011). According to Li (2007), talents are individuals with above-average skills who have greater contributions to society than others. According to Zhong (1999), a talent refers to a person who has developed some outstanding internal characteristics. Miao (2009) referred to the concept of talent as individuals who have skills, abilities, and talents that exceed the average value of social talents in some respects and who are regarded as such by society in practice (Yang, 2014).

(4) The definition of talent in terms of the potential for greater contributions. Zhou et al. (2012) stated that talents are those with the potential to make great contributions, and whether they have already made such contributions should only be considered when a talent is awarded and promoted. However, the concepts of talent and talent development are often confused due to a singular focus of defining the former as someone who has made some significant contribution. In the context of making a great contribution, only those who have been developed can be considered or recognised as talents by society. Therefore, when discussing the concept of talent, this study should keep in mind not only the performance and effects, but also future potential. This study would like to point out that this is a similar perspective to the one held by the CIPD (2006) in the UK, namely that talents are those who are capable of

bringing performance, contributions, or special value to an organisation. This includes both those who are currently able to contribute to an organisation as well as those with the potential to do so in the near future.

While the definition of talent is not universally agreed upon, some consensus exists within the literature. The 'Outline of the National Program for Medium- and Long-Term Talent Development' (2010–2020), issued by the Chinese government in 2010, defines talents as those able to produce creative work, and contribute to society by using their specialised skills and knowledge. Among human resources, talents are workers with a higher level of ability and quality than others. 'One difference' and 'three characteristics' can be summarised by this definition. 'One difference' refers to the difference and connection between talent and human resources, with talents being specific examples of human resources with a greater ability and quality than human resources as a whole. 'Three characteristics' refer to the extensiveness of the scope of talents, which emphasises professional knowledge or skills; the creativity of the nature of talents' labour, which emphasises the progress of the direction of talents' labour; and the emphasis on the virtues and contributions of talents.

In the public sector, talents are individuals distinguished by their exceptional skills, knowledge, and capabilities, underpinned by a steadfast commitment to serving the public good (Light, 2001). These individuals exhibit a profound dedication to contributing to the collective welfare, demonstrating the capacity to make substantial and positive impacts within government organizations (Leadbeater, 2023). Talents within the public sector are characterised by their adeptness in addressing intricate challenges, fostering effective governance, and instigating innovation in the delivery of public services. Their contributions extend beyond individual proficiency, encapsulating a resolute commitment to the values and objectives of public administration (Chun & Evans, 2023).

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In summary:

First, there is no single or unified definition of talent at any level. Indeed, the above shows that a number of studies have contributed suggestions for clarifying and defining this term, as well as approaches to explaining it.

Second, there are some new insights to be gained from research in the Chinese context, possibly due to its cultural characteristics, which lend a new perspective to this term. Accordingly, this study pays thorough consideration to this point.

Third, this study attempts to distinguish and identify talents by combining some common keywords to describe their essential elements or qualities, such as 'knowledge and skills', 'contribution', 'creative', and 'leadership', as well as some other intrinsic qualities. Moreover, 'key employees', 'high-performing workers', and 'high potentials' are often used as alternative terms for talent. This study underscores the distinct characteristics of talents within the public sector. These individuals are defined by their outstanding skills, knowledge, and capabilities, coupled with an unwavering commitment to serving the public good. Their dedication to contributing to collective welfare is evident through their capacity to make substantial and positive impacts within government organizations. Public sector talents excel in addressing intricate challenges, fostering effective governance, and instigating innovation in public service delivery. Their contributions extend beyond individual proficiency, reflecting a resolute commitment to the values and objectives of public administration.

In addition, from an inclusive perspective, everyone has the potential to contribute to organisational performance and success. However, from an exclusive perspective, certain individuals can offer greater contributions.

3.4.2 The Meaning of Talent Management

TM originally began by organisations' emphasis on talent recruitment caused by the War for Talent, and later gradually developed into a management practice involving a wider scope,

including talent attraction, retention, and development (Scullion & Collions, 2010). While the definition of TM continues to be discussed, it is generally believed that TM is increasing in significance (Gümüş *et al.*, 2013).

The concept of TM has been questioned as possibly being an old concept framed as a new idea (Sarmad *et al.*, 2013), and has been criticised by the academic community for its lack of conceptual and intellectual foundation, definition, and rigour (Collings, Scullion and Vaiman, 2011). Preece et al. (2011) asserted that replacing 'people' by 'talent' may demonstrate HRM's fashionability, and conceptualising TM in terms of the functions of traditional term 'Human Resource', and that it has the same function, only with a greater dependency on corporations and the internet. According to existing research, TM is indeed in its infancy (Thunnissen, Boselie and Fruytier, 2013a). While there has been some practical exploration, a significant degree of theoretical advancement is still required (Collings and Mellahi, 2009).

While the concept has existed for some time, TM has further been developed in the context of the new challenges of coordinating and integrating human resources on a global scale. The rapid progress of globalisation has propelled the global competition for talent and international mobility (Farndale, Scullion and Sparrow, 2010). Therefore, the global TM has roused wide academic and practice concern. Indeed, Scullion and Collings (2010) defined global TM as the strategic integration of resources and development at the international level, including the proactive identification, development, and strategic adjustment of high performance and high potential employees worldwide. Broadly speaking, global TM involved all actions aimed at attracting, developing, and retaining employees with high-level human capital, as well as the adherence to the strategic direction of enterprises in dynamic, highly competitive, and globalised multinational companies (Tarique and Schuler, 2010).

However, an elegant and unifying conceptual framework, or theoretical foundation (Vaiman, Collings and Scullion, 2017; Skuza and Scullion, 2021), that integrates diverse findings on its consequence in social practice has yet to be developed. Moreover, its significance related to added value and the effectiveness of TM has not been accurately stated and greater utilised (Bethke-Langenegger, Mahler and Staffelbach, 2011).

First, each employee has qualities and strengths that are valuable to the organisation (Meyers

and van Woerkom, 2014). Accordingly, the resulting challenge for TM is to have a continuous and reasonable positioning, as well as the employing of talents in order to express their fullest potential and dedication (Swailes, Downs and Orr, 2014). Indeed, the true function of TM is to arouse the greatest potential of the outstandingly talented to emerge and mature (Lewis and Heckman, 2006). However, it is insufficient to simply recognise talents; there must also be a system for managing their talents, meeting their expectations, developing significant positive effects of psychological contract or occupational commitment, and, finally, producing results (Festing, Kornau and Schäfer, 2015).

Thus, TM can achieve the goal of attracting and retaining talents, and ensure that the most suitable and capable individuals are identified and valued (Tamunomiebi and Worgu, 2020). In addition, TM can effectively identify and meet the needs of talent development, and provide career choices and development paths (De Vos and Dries, 2013; Rezaei and Beyerlein, 2018). Moreover, as a systematic investment in human capital, it can not only guarantee the stability and expansion of employee quality, but improve intellectual capital as well (Iscandarov, 2018).

Second, scholars have expounded upon the important roles and significance of TM on a strategic level to face an intense competitive global landscape (Morris, Snell and Björkman, 2016; McDonnell *et al.*, 2017; Schreuder and Noorman, 2018), and have emphasised that it can guarantee the realisation of an organisation's strategies and goals (Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen and Scullion, 2020). Although many studies have supported this view, research on business organisations has verified the link between TM practices and business strategies on improved performance (e.g., Hongal & Kinange, 2020; Rabbi et al., 2015; Rani & Joshi, 2012). All activities should focus on a higher enterprise goal, and TM is no exception; it should be recognised and realised as part of the organisational strategy, and form a broad view of talent (Collings, Mellahi and Cascio, 2019; Al Aina and Atan, 2020). From the perspective of global strategy, Scullion and Collings (2007) defined TM as a strategic integration of resourcing and development, which involves the proactive identification and (strategic) development of high-performing and high-potential strategic employees on a global scale. McDonnell and Collings et al. (2017) provided a more specific definition: Strategic TM is composed mainly of activities and processes of identifying key positions, which reflects different contributions on the sustainable competitive advantage of organisations, and includes the development of a talent

pool of high-potential and high-performing incumbents, as well as the establishment of a differentiated human resource architecture to fill these positions and retain their continued commitment.

In the process of literature review, this study found that the concept of TM is often mixed with those of talent strategy, strategic TM, succession management, human resource planning, and so on. One of the most common cases relates to the simple replacement of strategic human resource management with strategic TM, which still discusses the content of traditional human resource practices, such as recruitment, leadership development, and succession planning (Ahsan, 2018; Dhanabhakyam et al., 2014).

Although its concept still lacks a solid definition and theoretical interpretations (Scullion & Collings, 2011), TM is a growing field (Bethke-Langenegger, Mahler and Staffelbach, 2011), and some general views have previously been proposed.

Researchers have provided several explanations of the concept. For instance, some have described TM as the process of exerting employees' advantages and realising their values (Creelman, 2004); a tool with which to reap full economic benefits (Lockwood, 2006); a tentative guarantee that employees at all levels could reach their highest potential (Redford, 2005); an anticipation of the need for human capital, and the formulation of specific plans to balance supply and demand (Cappelli, 2013); a process to meet the needs of human capital (Silzer and Dowell, 2009); or the additional management processes and opportunities that are made available to talented people (Blass & Chartered Management Institute, 2007); the core competencies to achieve an organisation's strategy and response to global challenges (Scullion et al., 2010); a challenge to 'make' and 'buy' in order to manage risk; or a solution for HR challenges (Scullion & Collings, 2011). In addition, Cheloha (2005) defined TM from the perspective of corporate succession planning. However, rather than define the term directly, some scholars have acknowledged the strategic importance of TM without a single, consistent, or comprehensive definition (e.g., Finnegan et al., 2004; Ashton & Morton, 2005); specifically including arousing the concern of talent needs, setting good employer images to attract talents, ensuring high performance, and helping talent retention.

According to the results of prior research, this study categorised the various definitions of TM

based on the following aspects: definitions based on functions; definitions based on talent pool; definitions based on performance; and definitions based on strategic orientation.

(1) Definitions Based on Functions

Many scholars have defined TM as the typical practices, operations, activities, and professional decision making of HR departments, including talent recruitment, selection, development, and succession management (e.g., Byham, 2001; Heinen & O'Neill,2004; Hilton, 2000; Mercer, 2005; Olsen, 2000). For example, Byham (2001) and Mercer (2005) argued that TM's function is to significantly contribute to recruitment, training, and development of talents – highly similar to traditional HRM. As with the practical activities of HR departments, TM operates throughout the entire process of organisational activities, rather than just existing in a certain link (Heinen & O'Neill, 2004).

Under the scientific and reasonable use of TM, the most suitable candidates can be obtained and encouraged to acquire organisational knowledge use to develop both the firms and themselves (Hongal & Kinange, 2020; Ifeoma, 2015; Sullivan, 2005). Moreover, training and development advocates the encouragement of growing talents (Al Suwaidi et al., 2020; Griffith et al., 2019; Groves, 2007; Cohn, Khurana & Reeves, 2005). Performance management has occasionally been used to alleviate certain TM challenges (Aguinis and Burgi-Tian, 2021), and some scholars have emphasised the importance of succession planning and leadership development in TM (Groves, 2007; Griffith, Baur and Buckley, 2019; Al Suwaidi *et al.*, 2020).

(2) Definitions Based on Talent Pool

In developing and retaining talents, TM involves a series of processes designed to ensure that there are sufficient employees at all positions throughout an organisation (Rothwell, 2011; Okwakpam et al., 2019; Cannon, 2011), thereby avoiding any gaps in talent supply and incorporating typical HR practices (Bonneton et al., 2020; Byrne, 2013; Ingham, 2006). For example, Pascal (2004) defined TM from the perspective of talent pool, believing that its main function was to provide all organisational positions with corresponding services. Lermusiaux (2005) argued that TM is the management of an enterprise's talent pool through understanding and meeting the needs of employees in order to ensure their effective performance. Schweyer (2004) more greatly emphasises talent pools, arguing that reasonable

resource allocation is based on the effective understanding of employee needs. Kesler (2002) analysed the differences between TM and traditional HRM, and believed that succession planning must become a more comprehensive and creative set of assessment and development practices that support rewarding, promoting, and retaining talent. In short, scholars who advocate this definition have attached great importance to TM's construction of talent pool, emphasising it to be a management mechanism to ensure that each position in the organisation has appropriate and sufficient talents.

(3) Definitions Based on Performance

In this definition, TM typically does not take organisational boundaries or job specificities into account, but is instead based on general job settings. Within this view, TM should not only consider the special role of talents, but should more generally find and reward talents (Axelrod, Handfield-Jones and Michaels, 2002; Dmitrieva *et al.*, 2014). Organisations should place a greater focus on managing the performance of talent rather than on specific job succession (Michaels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod, 2001; Axelrod, Handfield-Jones and Michaels, 2002; Ashton and Morton, 2005; Cheese, Thomas and Craig, 2007; Hills, 2009; Rothwell *et al.*, 2015). Axelod (2001) interpreted TM from the perspective of performance, holding that the performance produced by talents in the process of work is highly important, and the role of talents can be more effectively used through performance management. Moreover, this view also regards talent as an undifferentiated resource. According to Baqutayan (2014), talent is significant, and the function of a strong talent pool is to manage everyone at a high level of performance (Calle-Duran et al., 2021; Tansley, 2011; Walker & LaRocco, 2002; Buckingham, Vosburgh, 2001) or increase the value of talents (Ang, 1991; Purkiss & Royston-Lee, 2014; Tucker et al.,2005; McCauley, 2006; Josan, 2020 Lardner,2005). In conclusion, in this category of definitions, one of the main aims of TM is to identify, hire, and differentiate rewards for highly-capable performers without regard to their special roles or the particular needs of the organisation.

(4) Definitions Based on Strategy Orientation

It has been argued that TM should be combined with an organisation's practice and operation (Rabbi *et al.*, 2015), and that the human resource framework should be reasonably designed

according to changes in the internal and external environment (Horváthová, 2011.). TM should be consistent with the company's development strategy (Sharma and Bhatnagar, 2009; Silzer and Dowell, 2009; Collings, Mellahi and Cascio, 2019). TM based on strategic orientation foregrounds the identification of key positions, which is an important factor determining the performance of organisational objectives (Thunnissen, Boselie and Fruytier, 2013b; Martin, 2015; Painter-Morland *et al.*, 2019), that is, TM is taken as a strategy to obtain competitive advantages (Ashton and Morton, 2005; Turner and Kalman, 2014). In this view, TM is often thought of as a collection of strategic activities and processes (Makram, Sparrow and Greasley, 2017) which identify the key factors that have different contributions to sustainable competitive advantages (Latukha, 2018a). TM could also be used to fill vacancies, develop high-potential and high-performing talents, establish a competent and responsible team and ensuring their commitment to an organisation, and promote the organisation's operation effectiveness and efficiency (Collings and Mellahi, 2009). The strategically-oriented definition of TM places greater emphasis on the identification of key objectives with the potential to differentiate the impacts of a company's competitive advantage (Boudreau and Ramstad, 2005; Huselid, Becker and Beatty, 2005; Silzer and Dowell, 2009; Stahl *et al.*, 2012; Ibrahim, no date). However, the interpretation of TM should not only consider an enterprise's current interests, but also to its long-term development (Ansar, 2018; Meng and Berger, 2018; Crane and Hartwell, 2019; Whysall, Owtram and Brittain, 2019).

The Understanding of TM in Chinese Academia

TM research in China often keeps pace with the times. For instance, Yu (1986) believed TM research in China to have originated in its ancient past, and modernised in line with its development through the use of modern science and technology. This use has helped research direct TM to a modern, advanced level, characterised by exploring the concepts, systems, methods, means, and organisations of TM to realise the advancement of concepts, the legalisation of management, the scientificisation of methods, the computerisation of means, the effectiveness of organisations, and the specialisation of personnel. According to the 'Report on the Outline of the Tenth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development' (2001), the talent strategy was elevated to the level of national strategy. Since then, Chinese scholars began to study the related issues. For instance, Yang (2004) believed that talent strategy is an overall plan that guides and restrains talent development. Not only

does it include the purposes, objectives, strategic decisions, and countermeasures of talent development, but it also includes the plans and methods for the purposes and objectives. From the macro-level, some scholars have studied TM from a historical-narrative approach, coming and summarising TM concepts in traditional Chinese culture. Moreover, the importance of talent has been emphasised, and how to discover, cultivate, manage, and develop talents in ancient China has been elaborated upon (Guo & Zhao, 2004). Deng (2015) proposed the principles of implementing TM strategies in China – including under the supervision of the CPC – through people-oriented and step-by-step approaches, leading to breakthroughs at key points in the self-help and goal management processes. Li and Jia (2011) summarised the TM experiences of developed countries based on the background of global integration, and proposed that China's TM should adhere to the strategy of 'making foreign things serve China', learn from Western experiences, and insist on a people-oriented principle. Luo (2014) believed that innovative TM is particularly important for a developing country, and Wang (2007) insisted that TM ought to be conducted in accordance with the demands of individual talents and the marketing modes of companies, and that specific HRM tools should be changed based on the specific situation. Moreover, from the perspective of international comparison, Zhang (2009) analysed the strategic intention and theme of TM in different organisational development periods. However, most research has focused on the objective systems of TM strategies, the content of TM, and the implementation of TM, talent strategies, and other aspects. While these studies have focused on the instrumental theory of TM, their contributions and innovations to the theoretical grounding seems somewhat lacking in that they only discussed the level of TM strategy and its objectives, but not the scope of specific indicators (Duan, 2007). However, these studies have effectively identified the practical issues of implementing TM strategies, that is, the hollowing-out of TM strategy formulation and the disordered implementation of countermeasures.

Many scholars have focused on the issue of TM in enterprises through conducting studies from the perspectives of performance, competitiveness, marketing, and talent flow. For example, Xiao (2003) held that the stock and structure of knowledge are important manifestations of core competitiveness, meaning that the emphasis on talents is key to improving enterprise efficiency, and that TM is closely related to enterprise performance. Zeng (2016) proposed that TM's focus on enterprise should concern two main aspects: First,

talent quantity, that is, how many people are needed in terms of an enterprise's business development. Second, the quality of talent, which refers to an enterprise's industry and market competition. The various combinations of the quantity and quality of talent determine the different talent strategies adopted by enterprises. The following six types have been proposed: predatory, elite, scale-forming, constrictive, robust, and mixed. Furthermore, from the perspective of enterprises' sustainable competitiveness, Qiu et al. (2009) argued that strategic TM is an important prerequisite for maintaining sustainable competitiveness. Indeed, the experience of HRM can be used for reference, but cannot be repeated, and only through TM innovation can enterprises maintain sustainable competitiveness. From a marketing perspective, Zhu (2003) cautioned that TM should be designed based on market segmentation and meeting the different needs of talents by differentiated management. From the perspective of economic conditions, Tong and Wang (2011) analysed the strategic TM in small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and proposed new ideas for their development. Chen and Zhang (2012) analysed the phenomenon and influential factors of talent flow in enterprises, and proposed that enterprises should classify different groups of talents and establish appropriate TM strategies for preventing talent loss.

From the perspective of research content, Chinese scholars have paid increasing attention to innovative talents, as evidenced by the gradual emergence of talent research. Yang (2014) suggested that research could in conducted in colleges and universities as the carriers of talent research because of the agglomeration of talents they house. Duan (2015) analysed the development and changes of the essential attributes of talents, proposing that talents make significant contributions to society, with innovation being one of the most important criteria with which to measure them. Sun (2014) elaborated upon how to build an effective institutional environment for talents from three aspects: improving innovator status, mobilising market mechanisms, and strengthening evaluation. Chen (2015) proposed the index system of constructing talent management environments, indicating that the regions that implement talent management have better entrepreneurial innovation indices. Chang (2015) also showed the role of effective management systems for innovative talents in that they guarantee environments for developing and maximising talents.

Much research has started from traditional cultural values. Liu (2007) pointed out that the cultural environment of talents is conducive to conducting talent innovative activities. Zhou

(2014) proposed a study on the influence of traditional Chinese thoughts on the strategic thinking of strengthening the nation through talents, and mentioned that traditional thoughts have both positive and negative effects on talent development.

The above critical review identified the following findings:

First, based on the above viewpoints, this study holds that TM refers to the strategic management activities and processes of identifying, attracting, retaining, and developing core talent resources in order to sustain or heighten competitive advantages and high organisation performance. This helps enterprises and individuals best play their long-term advantages and provide a continuous supply of talent.

Second, in China, more research has focused on the value of previous talent policies themselves, but have rarely considered the development and changes of the TM system. Indeed, more focus has been placed on the analysis of the obstacles of the existing system, but less on the influencing factors and reasons. The majority of the reviewed studies have focused on TM processes and practices, but few have discussed the interaction of stakeholders. Moreover, most of the relevant research has been conducted from an organisational perspective, yet few have considered the characteristics and demands of talents.

3.5 The Current State of Talent Management Literature

As a starting point, this study mapped the existing research based on 'country' (Figure 3.2). As of May 2020, within TM, the United States contributed the largest number of papers (342), followed by the United Kingdom (165), and China (146). Interestingly, China is becoming the most active research community in this field, taking the lead by shifting their research interest to TM, and changing their outlook on talents and traditional HRM. However, despite the wealth of relevant papers in China, the number of citations is extremely low. This could be due either to cultural and linguistic barriers, or from the deviation and difference of Chinese scholars' understanding of TM. Besides, because of China's large population base, comparing the huge number of talents, the current number of publications and research is far from sufficient. Therefore, with my own advantage, this study positioned TM research field in China.
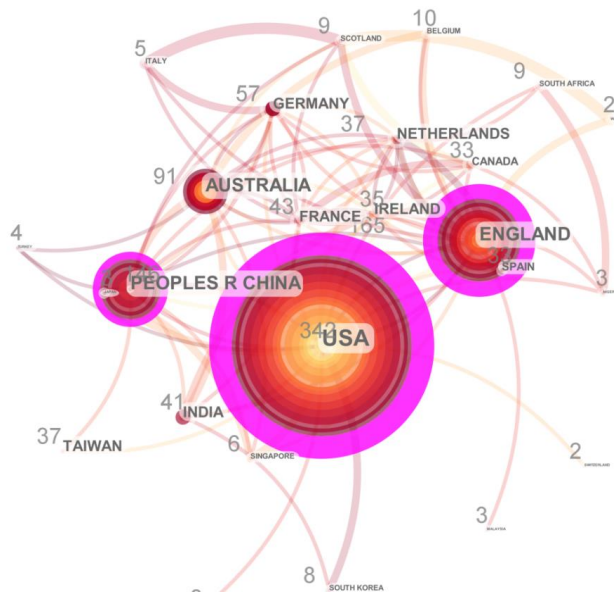
Figure 3.2 Knowledge Map of Talent Management based on Countries

TM research is expected to shift from a slow to an active development period. Of all the articles within the field, 607 articles were in the category of Management, 268 from Business, 107 from Applied Psychology, 94 from Industrial Relations Laboratory, 66 from Economics, 53 from Education and Educational Research, and 50 from Hospitality Leisure Sport and Tourism. The most influential journal was the *Academy of Management Journal*, followed by the *International Journal of Human Resource Management* and the *Academy of Management Review*. Of the 10 most-cited journals, 7 were in the Management category. Hence, this study would argue that TM is a topic worthy of further research in the field of management.

Table 3.1 Highly-cited Journals

Ranking	Highly-cited Journals	Freq	Ranking	Highly-cited Journals	Freq
1	*Academy of Management Journal*	426	6	*Journal of World Business*	332
2	*International Journal of Human Resource Management*	401	7	*Journal of Applied Psychology*	315
3	*Academy of Management Review*	394	8	*Human Resource Management Review*	311
4	*Journal of Management*	374	9	*Journal of Organizational Behavior*	241
5	*Harvard Business Review*	346	10	*Human Resource Management – US*	234

This study grouped the most pressing TM issues into the following five topics: job performance

and satisfaction, knowledge management, sustainable development, global TM, and managing female talent. These topics often interweave with sub-propositions (e.g., talent identification, attraction, talent retention, and talent development) and create a comprehensive picture of TM themes. The identification of these (sub)themes allowed me to locate the most influential literature, which is discussed below.

(1) Job performance and satisfaction: This typically involves or relates to the work–life balance (Deery, 2008; Deery and Jago, 2015; Alrowwad *et al.*, 2018; Obeidat *et al.*, 2019; Maurya, Agarwal and Srivastava, 2020; Rodríguez-Sánchez *et al.*, 2020; Budhiraja, Varkkey and McKenna, 2022), retention strategies (Deery, 2008; Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2019; Muhammad & Shao, 2013; Narayanan et al., 2019; Oladapo, 2014; Pandita & Ray, 2018; Singh & Sharma, 2015), talent mindset competency (Arocas & Morley, 2015; Mahfoozi et al., 2018; McCauley, 2006; Sharma & Bhatnagar, 2009), high performance (Cheese, Thomas and Craig, 2007; Oehley and Theron, 2010; Coulson-Thomas, 2012; van den Brink, Fruytier and Thunnissen, 2013; Anwar *et al.*, 2014; Ali, Bashir and Mehreen, 2019; Hongal and Kinange, 2020), organisational justice (Gelens *et al.*, 2013, 2014; Swailes, 2013; O'Connor and Crowley-Henry, 2019; Behzad and Issa, 2020; Gohar, 2021; Kwon and Jang, 2021), employee reactions (Björkman *et al.*, 2013; Gelens *et al.*, 2014; Khoreva, Vaiman and Van Zalk, 2017; De Boeck, Meyers and Dries, 2018, 2018; Asplund, 2020; Sumelius, Smale and Yamao, 2020; Wikhamn, Asplund and Dries, 2021), the effectiveness and inferences of implementation of TM (Ali et al., 2019; Awan & Zamir, 2016; Bethke-Langenegger et al., 2011; Bibi, 2019; Johennesse & Chou, 2017; Mohammed, 2015.), intrinsic rewards and incentive (Tymon, Stumpf and Doh, 2010; Cooke, Saini and Wang, 2014; Rabbi *et al.*, 2015; Rastgoo, 2016; Victor and Hoole, 2017; Kravariti, Oruh, *et al.*, 2021), and psychological control (Poisat, Mey and Sharp, 2018; Mensah, 2019; Pant and Venkateswaran, 2019; Yazdanshenas, 2019; Herrera and De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021; Holland and Scullion, 2021), among others.

(2) Knowledge management: This predominantly concerns analyses around relationship with TM (Whelan and Carcary, 2011; Mohammed, Gururajan and Hafeez-Baig, 2017; Sharipov, Krotenko and Dyakonova, 2021; Daraei, Karimi and Vahidi, no date), knowledge transfer (Calo, 2008; Reilly, 2008; Peet *et al.*, 2010; Ahammad *et al.*, 2018; Cross Walker, 2020), knowledge assets for competitive advantage (Collings, 2010; Vaiman & Vance, 2008; Swart & Kinnie, 2010), teamwork integration models (Deery, 2008; Oltra and Vivas-López, 2013; Bothma, 2015;

Orlova, Afonin and Voronin, 2015; Ford, 2017; Fernando and Wulansari, 2020), social capital (Ariss et al., 2014; Arena & Uhl-Bien, 2018; Crane & Hartwell, 2019; Moeller et al., 2016; Soltani et al., 2021; Yaghoubi & YousefAbadi, 2018), and succession plans (Ingham, 2006; Poorhosseinzadeh and Subramaniam, 2012; Martin, 2015; Talpoş *et al.*, 2017; Jindal and Shaikh, 2020), and other related topics.

(3) Sustainable development: This often involves research on competitive advantage (Ashton and Morton, 2005; Turner and Kalman, 2014; Rofaida, 2016; Latukha, 2018b; Nsour and Tayeh, 2018; Ibrahim, no date), strategic management (Ansar, 2018; Jayaraman, Talib and Khan, 2018; Mahjoub *et al.*, 2018; Sheehan, Grant and Garavan, 2018; Järvi and Khoreva, 2020), social responsibility (Bhattacharya, Sen and Korschun, 2008; Kim and Scullion, 2011; Y. Lacey and Groves, 2014; Story, Castanheira and Hartig, 2016; Anlesinya, Amponsah-Tawiah and Dartey-Baah, 2019, 2019; Farndale and Atli, 2019; González-Masip, Martín-de Castro and Hernández, 2019), context roles (Levenson, 2012; Thunnissen, Boselie and Fruytier, 2013b; Devins and Gold, 2014; Glaister *et al.*, 2018; Poisat, Mey and Sharp, 2018; Whysall, Owtram and Brittain, 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo, Thunnissen and Scullion, 2020; M. Wang *et al.*, 2022), organisational culture (Yogita & Maitri, 2010; Hartmann et al., 2010; Kontoghiorghes, 2016; Meng et al., 2016; Saleh & Atan, 2021; Sparrow & Makram, 2015; Indonesia & Sadeli, 2012), organisational commitment (Almaaitah et al., 2020; Aytaç, 2015; Kontoghiorghes, 2016; Luna-Arocas et al., 2020; Nobarieidishe et al., 2014; Ping, 2001; Suman &Rupa, 2021), leadership (Betchoo, 2014; Powell & Lubitsh, 2007; Sharma & Bhatnagar, 2009; Silzer & Dowell, 2009; Barkhuizen et al., 2020; Widodo & Mawarto, 2020), business excellence (K. Vora, 2013; Whysall, Owtram and Brittain, 2019; Dianingrum, Adawiyah and Wulandari, 2021; Ferreiro-Seoane, Miguéns-Refojo and Atrio-Lema, 2021; Joseph, Totawar and Sam, 2022), and innovation (Marin-Garcia, Aznar-Mas and González-Ladrón-de-Guevara, 2011; Sart, 2014; Salau *et al.*, 2018; van den Broek, Boselie and Paauwe, 2018; Ibrahim and AlOmari, 2020; Parrish and Joyce-McCoach, 2020; Pandita, 2021), among others.

(4) Global TM: This heated topic routinely involves global mobility (Farndale, Scullion and Sparrow, 2010; Kim and McLean, 2012; Collings, 2014a; Farndale *et al.*, 2014; King, 2015; Morley *et al.*, 2015; McNulty and De Cieri, 2016; Collings and Isichei, 2018; Anlesinya, Dartey-Baah and Amponsah-Tawiah, 2019), individual and organisational goals (Collings, 2014c; Farndale *et al.*, 2014; Ingram, 2016; Thunnissen, 2016; Hongal and Kinange, 2020), self-

initiated implications (Altman & Baruch, 2013; Cao et al., 2012; Doherty & Dickmann, 2013; Haslberger & Vaiman, 2013; Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010; Shao & Ariss, 2020; Vaiman et al., 2015; Vaiman & Haslberger, 2013; Wechtler et al., 2022), mobility of corporate knowledge (Cranston, 2014; Beaverstock, 2017; Farndale et al., 2014; Jöns et al., 2017; King, 2015; Sparrow et al., 2013), career development (Ali et al., 2019; Arar & Öneren, 2018; Claussen et al., 2014; Crowley-Henry et al., 2019; Kaewnaknaew et al., 2022; Kosasih, 2021.; Sakthi Ananthan et al., 2019), and expatriation and inpatriation (Cerdin and Brewster, 2014; Cerdin and Sharma, 2014; Moeller *et al.*, 2016; Stokes *et al.*, 2016; Maley and Moeller, 2018; Purgał-Popiela, 2021).

(5) Managing female talent: This category involves a variety of unique issues, such as female leadership (Sankovich, 2014; Hoff and Scott, 2016; Böhmer and Schinnenburg, 2018; Kirk, 2019; Litwin, Ngan and Atembe, 2019; Et.al, 2021), gender sensitivity or inclusion (Sidani and Al Ariss, 2014; Festing, Kornau and Schäfer, 2015; Böhmer and Schinnenburg, 2016; Latukha, Michailova, *et al.*, 2022), gender quotas (Tatli, Vassilopoulou and Özbilgin, 2013; Bonneton, Festing and Muratbekova-Touron, 2020; Gilmartin *et al.*, 2020; Seierstad *et al.*, 2021; Aronsson and Frykberg, 2022), and the spousal adjustment problem (Cole, 2011; Gupta, Banerjee and Gaur, 2012; Mäkelä and Suutari, 2013; Ott and Michailova, 2016; Ahmad *et al.*, 2020).

In addition, TM research consistently appears in conjunction with performance and organisational commitment, and is closely related to the four themes of strategy perspectives, organisational models, job satisfaction, and employee engagement. These themes (which influenced the focus of the current paper) are the most prominent in terms of research results, quantity, and influence.

From the perspective of research objectives, the study of TM (represented by scientific and technological personnel) arose in 2010. Afterwards, the highlight of education appeared in 2016, and focused on 'university' in 2017, and has since grown in popularity. In terms of research topics, success planning, risk, determination, strategy, identity, career development, engagement, behaviour, and satisfaction (among others) have attracted significant scholarly attention.

From the perspective of research methods, meta-analysis was the most favoured during the

field's nascent stage. In subsequent years, scholars began to ascribe importance to contextual factors and explore more qualitative research within TM. From 2018 until the present, qualitative research has been the dominant research keyword in this field. Accordingly, I adopted this method for this thesis.

Through an overview of literature, the following arguments prompted my interest in this topic:

(1) A more comprehensive understanding of the meaning of TM can be obtained through considering the Chinese context.

(2) By focusing on universities with a substantial number of talented employees as the research object, one can more comprehensively understand the role played by TM in enhancing organisational performance and success, the impact it has had, and the challenges it has encountered during its implementation.

(3) Comparing TM practices across different organisations enables us to gain a deeper understanding of how TM fits into strategy and organisational culture, and what kind of reactions are generated when they are combined.

3.6 Talent Management Architectures

TM's roles and contributions can best be understood by first understanding TM's nature and of what it consists. The concept of architecture is a way of describing the systems, practices, competencies, and employee performance behaviours that support the development and management of strategic human capital (Becker, 1998). This section explores how TM systems are composed and contribute to competitive advantage and organisational success.

The co-creation unit quietly forms within organisations, disrupts the traditional organisation, and challenges the wisdom of human resource managers (Roser, DeFillippi and Goga Cooke, 2014). In the current economic environment, many enterprises have achieved rapid growth, but almost all have encountered obstacles regarding talent scarcity and sustained competitive advantage (Rabbi *et al.*, 2015).

The context should be the starting point of our discussion. Recent research has highlighted the significance of context and emphasised that TM should not be understood as a stand-

alone phenomenon (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020), but rather as complex and multi-levelled (Wiblen and McDonnell, 2020). On a macro-level, it includes the economic, political, regulatory, technological, and cultural environments (King and Vaiman, 2019) – leading to Chapter 2's systemic review of the Chinese context in order to gain a deeper understanding of TM in Chinese universities.

Some studies have used the concept of talent ecosystems (e.g., Burrell, 2020; Karaboga et al., 2020), which seems a highly interesting approach with which to gain a comprehensive picture of TM architecture. If the context is the living environment or the atmosphere (involving the producers, consumers, and decomposers in the natural ecosystem), the talent eco-chain is the connection of talent pools based on the system's work connection, which transmits value rather than food. In this system, talent pools are formed based on talent value (including knowledge, skills, labour results, and experience) (Mäkelä, Björkman and Ehrnrooth, 2010). There are complex relationships among various elements, including the transmission of knowledge, ability, experience, lessons and labour results between talents or talent groups, as well as internally- or externally-provided support and services (Peet *et al.*, 2010; Wang-Cowham, 2011).

This understanding of talents and talent pools allows a deeper comprehension of their interdependence and competition. Talent aggregation is the result of talent flow. Due to the influence of certain factors, talents can flow from one region or enterprise to another. This process of talent agglomeration not only maximises talent value, but also produces a group effect. This results in different configurations of the talent portfolio being emphasised and integrated in order to achieve a competitive advantage (Morris, Snell and Björkman, 2016). Therefore, it is important to recognise that creating a talent pool is not simply a matter of adding and subtracting many talents, but rather a mutually-beneficial symbiosis based on a specialised division of labour and cooperative efforts, wherein both cooperation and competition exist (van den Broek, Boselie and Paauwe, 2018; Jooss, Lenz and Burbach, 2022).

While the formation of the food chain in nature is often a natural process, the talent ecosystem places a greater emphasis on the function of HR. The existence of TM is based on two things:

(1) As a result of implementing TM, the company has greater benefits than before.

(2) Participants in TM can contribute more value to the organisation.

The following section discusses the TM system in greater detail.

According to the above literature review and the comparison of the definitions of TM, it could be argued that TM covers the same core functions of HRM (Chuai, Preece and Iles, 2008), but with a greater emphasis on the change of management approach and thinking under the new environment and global context (Jyoti, 2014). It involves an important transformation of HRM functions (Elegbe, 2019; Fenech et al., 2019), a new way of regarding employees from a strategic level (Claus, 2019; Anlesinya and Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020), and a novel approach to integrating processes and systems (Ashton and Morton, 2005; King and Vaiman, 2019). TM significantly shows the shift of traditional HRM thinking modes related to core competitiveness, which is an important content of strategic HRM to adapt to today's dynamic and complex competitive environment (Hanif *et al.*, 2013; Collings, Mellahi and Cascio, 2017; Jayaraman, Talib and Khan, 2018).

TM contributes to the sustainable competitive advantage of the organisation, attracts and high-potential and high-performance talent, develops differentiated management, promotes the commitment of competent and responsible people to the organisation, and focuses more on the performance of talent, not just the succession of specific jobs (Meyers and van Woerkom, 2014; Rabbi *et al.*, 2015). In this way, the tendency of 'egalitarianism' in HRM is broken (Zhu, Iles and Shutt, 2011), the different needs of employees are afforded more attention, and the strategic goals are achieved through TM (Claus, 2019).

Existing research agrees that TM plays a crucial role in organisational performance (e.g., Arif & Uddin, 2016; Yuniati et al., 2021). Ulrich and Allen (2014) investigated 570 Asian firms and found that investments in TM seem to have a greater effect on business performance than on hiring or retaining talent. Almaaitah et al. (2020) analysed and verified the effects of TM on organisational performance improvement with organisational commitment as a mediating factor by using structural equation modelling. Kontoghiorghes (2016) tested the mediating role of satisfaction, motivation, and organisational commitment between high performance organisational culture and TM, and found that strategically-aligned and high ethical

performance organisational cultures have strong effects on talent attraction and retention, and that strategic TM could help employees realise the strategic goals of the organisation, and both maximise their own and the organisation's performance. Collings and Mellahi (2009) developed a framework to demonstrate that effective TM can indirectly improve organisational performance, mediated by work motivation, organisational commitment, and extra-role behavior.

Organisations have demonstrated an appealing desire to identify, retain, and develop talent in light of noticeable demographic changes and multi-cultural dialogues (Vaiman et al., 2017; Vaiman & Collings, 2013).

Some research has highlighted the impact of key positions on organisations' sustainable competitiveness (e.g., Ahammad et al., 2018; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Cui et al., 2018; Schreuder & Noorman, 2018). The identification of key positions is the main link in the TM framework. Indeed, Becker (2005) believed that it should be designed from the perspective of strategic role transformation; and it cannot be fixed, but should be changed according to the actual development situation (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). Further studies have mapped out the key dimensions, and expected outcomes and possible corresponding activities, that should be conducted in order to achieve these results (Van et al., 2017). Lepak (2008) proposed emphasising the employees' own value and uniqueness to the organisation. Boudreau and Ramstad (2005) considered that the identification of key positions is the main factor for maintaining the continuous competitiveness of an organisation and that, if too much is invested in non-core talents, organisational performance will decline (Tolbize, 2008). Since every organisation must consider cost, efficiency, and sustainability, it is unrealistic and unnecessary to hire the optimal talent for every position, which may lead to an over-investment in non-critical positions.

Scholars have indeed highlighted the importance of key positions in contributing to an organisation's sustainable competitiveness (Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Al Ariss, Cascio and Paauwe, 2014). The identification of key positions is asserted to be crucial for an organisation's strategic development, but the criteria for determining the significance of different departments or positions remain unspecified. Moreover, the emphasis on employees holding these positions possessing strategic capability, as proposed by Scullion & Collings (2010), lacks

a rigorous exploration of what constitutes strategic capability and how it is measured. While the paragraph introduces the idea that key roles should extend beyond the top management team, offering a more inclusive perspective, it falls short of scrutinizing the potential challenges and complexities associated with broadening the scope.

The formation of talent pools ostensibly represents the aggregation of key talents within an organisation, ostensibly tailored to address its diverse developmental requirements. Yet, an in-depth analysis of existing literature reveals a somewhat uncritical acceptance of this concept. Sivathanu and Pillai's (2019) reliance on interviews with senior HR officers, while insightful, may overlook potential biases and lacks a critical examination of the broader implications of talent analytics on organisational performance.

Similarly, Rowshan et al. (2020) advocate for the strategic placement of suitable candidates from talent pools into key positions, emphasizing developmental components. Cappelli's (2008) focus on the risk management aspect of talent pools adds a layer of complexity, but a critical analysis is necessary to uncover the inherent limitations and potential pitfalls of such risk management strategies.

Effective TM can attract and retain key talents for organisations, improve organisational performance, and thus help acquire a competitive advantage (Ashton & Morton, 2005; Hongal & Kinange, 2020; Rabbi et al., 2015). In fact, organisations exert considerable effort in hiring and retaining valuable and potential employees, as well as fully maximising their value (Garg and Rani, 2014). Meanwhile, not only does TM do the same, but it also emphasises how to retain and transform the value of said employees (Oladapo, 2014; Pandita & Ray, 2018). Traditional human resource planning involves creating various programmes according to the gap between labour supply and demand so as to ensure the acquisition of various human resources necessary for future development. However, it could be said that it pays insufficient attention to the retention of talents (Iles, Chuai and Preece, 2010).

TM is an attempt to thoroughly break the barriers between HRM functions and seamlessly connect the entire process. This helps realise an organisation's strategic intention by attracting, retaining, and effectively using all kinds of talents (Crowley-Henry, Benson and Al Ariss, 2019). Therefore, TM is a more strategic, holistic, and extended human resource planning system

(Ashton and Morton, 2005), which aims to strengthen organisational capabilities and promote the achievement of strategic priorities (Savanevičienė and Vilčiauskaitė, 2017). Organisations must have the ability to manage their workforces in uncertain economic environments. TM requires organisations to be forward-looking, proactive, and flexible in the acquisition and retention of talents, and to rapidly respond to the external environment (Mujtaba, Mubarik and Soomro, 2022). Based on the emphasis on key positions, Festing and Schäfer (2014) provided a framework to explain the effects on psychological contracts. Jooss et al. (2022) developed a framework following the principles of open-systems theory, and Naim and Lenka (2018) made the first study to propose a holistic framework to retain Generation Y employees.

Finally, TM reflects the decision to improve the talent of employees (Tansley, 2011) and their interaction with the organisation (Cunningham, 2007) – the latter of which essentially involves helping the organisation achieve its goals, acquire a competitive edge with which to reduce the risks caused by the uncertainty of human resources demands, and help face the challenges of competition and sustainable development (Hongal and Kinange, 2020). Sonnenberg et al. (2014) demonstrated the importance of consistency for positive talent attention and self-perception, as well as the impacts that differentiation strategies and psychological-contract fulfilment have upon organisational performance. In addition, the personal competency, employee expectations, and development opportunities provided by the enterprise are also important influencing factors (McCracken et al., 2016; Phillips & Roper, 2009; Swailes, 2013). Through TM, organisations' planning and budgeting of the number and quality of employees no longer remains static, but becomes more proactive during the hiring and training processes (Pandita and Ray, 2018), the concerns about differentiation strategies between key roles and talent in organisations (Collings and Mellahi, 2009), and how talent pools change in line with the strategic objectives, and how TM focuses and fits the organisational strategy (Garrow and Hirsh, 2008). Therefore, it is particularly important to take certain decisions regarding TM, which is specifically designed to establish employee engagement. Accordingly, it can improve organisational performance and connect personal goals to the organisation's strategic objectives, thereby increasing the accuracy of its responses to the competition.

Based on this overview of TM architectures, the TM system, processes, and practices, and how may it create sustained value, have been further clarified. The following section discusses TM within the specific field of universities.

3.7 Talent Management in Academia

Universities rely heavily on their teachers as academic human resources. The extent to which they are able to carry the responsibility accorded to them by their profession is an important factor in the sustainable development of universities. The rapid development of universities has resulted in the introduction of a large number of talents in order to compensate for the shortage of teachers. They are duty-bound to bear the responsibility of teaching, as well as engaging in scientific research and management, and have become the supporting force and source of motivation for the development of universities. Accordingly, TM has become increasingly important in academia.

In academia, allocating resources based on ability and performance has become almost a norm. Indeed, van den Brink et al. (2013) argued that universities are increasingly concerned with talent and performance management, and that three key dilemmas have come to the foreground: transparency versus autonomy, power of HR versus power of academics, and equality versus homogeneity. These have also been addressed by Paisey and Paisey (2018) in the context of Scotland and the Republic of Ireland. They argued that TM is influenced by subfields and context interactions that can be linked to universities' strategic priorities in the three dilemmas, leading to different outcomes. Thunnissen et al. (2021) provided specific TM approaches for managing talent in academia. Moreover, through the amalgamation of a strategy with its performance metrics, Divekar and Raman (2020) argued that TM can enhance long-term performance in the context of Indian business schools. Taamneh et al. (2021) compared TM practices between private and public universities in Jordan in relation to how they recruit, retain, train, develop, and measure the performance of talented people. According to Bradley (2016), TM is closely related to organisational strategy, and the metric used to measure academic performance and current management practices are closely related.

In the Chinese context, these dilemmas (van den Brink, Fruytier and Thunnissen, 2013) are believed to arise from various competitions, including vying for research programmes and special funds, institutional or disciplinary rankings, talent poaching, disputes over the priority of scholarly discoveries, job applications, and competitions around various research funding, rewards, titles, and identities (Yan, 2018). Such competition is pervasive, ranging from

university institutions to disciplines, teams, and individuals, and there are various tangible and intangible forms of competition between them. Consequently, while competition stimulates the vitality of the organisation and its members, it also brings tremendous pressure. The government is increasingly focusing on selective funding based on performance and capacity. This mechanism, which emphasises short-term performance evaluation and has a quasi-market orientation, has exerted enormous pressure upon universities. Although competition between organisations is not directly related to internal members, it stimulates a continuously strengthening sense of tension and anxiety among internal units (and even members) through various links, such as organisational mobilisation, planning, goal setting and decomposition, hierarchical accountability, and individual performance evaluation (Han *et al.*, 2020). In the current academic community, competitive pressure is considered to have many negative effects on teacher behaviour, such as avoiding major original research due to risk aversion, passion fatigue and reduced professional achievement due to excessive competitive pressure, the distortion of research behaviour, and even academic misconduct (Liao, 2023). The result of this collective consciousness and behavioural tendency is similar to what Hagstrom (1974) found.

This system is susceptible to risk aversion because funding agencies tend to be unwilling to support projects that may fail, and peer reviewers often give low evaluations to such projects. Similarly, the performance requirements of appointments within universities, tenure clock limits, and being included in comparisons between peers or colleagues all implicitly or explicitly warn of the threats that high-risk research may pose to one's career (Hackett, 2020). Moreover, many US universities are increasingly focusing on the project funding brought by educators (Hackett, 2020). Money has become not only an important factor in determining their income, promotion, and obtaining tenure, but also the amount of project funding determines its duration and how many students a teacher can supervise. In order to ensure research and publication, and thus obtain more funding opportunities, project leads must pass on the pressure they bear to their teams, which gradually changes their relationships with other members, especially students, from relatively simple mentors and instructors to a mix of businesspeople, entrepreneurs, teachers, and scholars. The following sections focus on university TM regarding the identification, attraction, retention, and development of talent.

3.7.1 Talent Identification

TM recognises that different employees have different abilities and make different contributions to organisation (Gelens et al., 2013; Nijs et al., 2014). Employee differences have different effects on organisational development, meaning that it is impossible for a certain framework to use all the situations of organisational development. Unless the organisation is dependent on a particular kind of human capital, talented people are needed and hired because they have the knowledge the organisation needs (Lepak & Snell, 1999; Tsui et al., 2007).

The higher education study of university teachers tends to focus on their ability to adapt to a wide variety of needs and master a broad range of skills. For example, Austin and McDaniels (2006) proposed: (1) Necessary knowledge and skills in core fields, that is, strategies and skills should be developed for curriculum design, teaching diverse learners, supporting learning, using information technology, assessing student learning, and managing their own professional development; (2) Professional attitude and habits, including maintaining integrity and honesty, and participating actively in academic conferences, reading research and teaching literature, and attending campus teacher development workshops to maintain lifelong learning and reflection; (3) Interpersonal communication, namely the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently, orally and in writing, in front of different audiences, and working with colleagues of different genders, races, religions, gender orientations, and disciplinary backgrounds; (4) Conceptual understanding, that is, in addition to mastering the necessary knowledge and research standards of the discipline, it is also necessary to understand their professional identity as scholars, the history, type, and goals of the university, as well as the different work expectations proposed by the university.

As opposed to the organisation of general enterprises, there are two basic 'processing' materials in the organisation of universities (Jiang, 2022). One is advanced knowledge, which a necessary condition for the birth, existence, development, and evolution of higher education, and the expansion of universities has also led to a bifurcation of the majors and disciplines within them, thereby complexifying the system of higher education. The other 'processed' materials is students, meaning that students can add value to the quality of thinking, professional skills, and cooperation and communication. Due to the different

combinations of these two processing materials, the identification of the material processor – the teacher – is complex.

With the slow penetration of managerialism into the academic profession, a new order of performance, competition, and control has gradually emerged. Researchers have defined talent identification in higher education as a process wherein individuals, organisations, and society engage in repeated consultations and continuous reflections to form professional rights and responsibilities, and the cognition of university teachers (Billot, 2010; Clegg, 2008; McAlpine et al., 2014; Han & Xie, 2022). The formation of an inner concept is strongly influenced by individual experience, ability, and capital, and the factors of external expectations include the reform policy of colleges and universities, the organisational evaluation (incentive) mechanism, academic community culture, and macro-national policy (Archer, 2008; Clegg, 2008; McAlpine, Amundsen and Turner, 2014). One source of this talent identification is the academic-oriented professionalism logic followed by the academic community (Cameron, 1981; Krishnaveni and Anitha, 2007; Xing, Du and Chen, 2022). Another source is the performance-oriented managerialism logic followed by the institution (Thrupp and Willmott, 2003; Connell, 2009; Kallio *et al.*, 2016; Wang and Jones, 2021). Accordingly, it is necessary to construct talent identification in the context of a game between the logics of professionalism and management.

Professionalism's mission is centred on the production of academic knowledge, while managerialism's mission is aimed at organisational performance competition. In conjunction, these constitute the power sources of talent identification (Deem *et al.*, 2007). These forms of logic are the motivation for talent identification, reflect the original intention of academic career selection and cognition of university value orientation, as well as the acquisition of a sense of professionalism and a sense of belonging among university teachers (Blackmore and Sachs, 2007). Professionalism, which is the driving force behind academic knowledge production, is normally used as the basis for identifying academic talent and emphasises academic identity exploration, reputation, and recognition. The identification of talent is generally based on traditional academic and professional values and ethics (Kolsaker, 2014; Locke, 2014). The logic of managerialism, which focuses on improving organisational efficiency and gaining a dominant market position, tends to identify with standardised constraints, such as performance evaluation (Deem, 2020; Cosenz, 2022). It is worth noting

that the two forms of logic often occur in a mixed way, so the process of talent identification often depends on the more dominant of the two (Levin, Kater and Wagoner, 2006).

At present, there is no authoritative unified talent identification in Chinese universities (Jiang & Liu, 2017). In practice, university talents are characterised by various plans and programmes developed by local governments and universities. For example, China's Ministry of Education (2020) published guidelines on what it considered to be the three levels of talent identification. The first category is high-level national talents, i.e., world-class academics with international influence at the forefront of their fields. The second category includes high-level talents at the provincial level, namely first-rate scholars with a comparably high reputation and influence in academia. The third category is high-level talent at the university level, such as young scholars with outstanding achievements in their subjects with a degree of popularity, academic influence, and contributions.

As yet, there is no academic consensus on the talent identification system in the Chinese context (M. Wang *et al.*, 2022). Through referring to the goals of the national talent strategy, some scholars have defined the research scope of university talents as those included in the government's academic talent policy and all types of talent programmes. For example, Xie (2017) studied the embedding and deconstruction of talent programmes in TM, and believed that talent identification reconstructs the original academic labour market. In addition, he examined the current state of university academic labour markets. Some researchers have argued academic titles and contributions to be standards, and that university talents are primarily associate professors or those with postgraduate or doctoral degrees (Gao, 2021). Moreover, university talents could also include those with no academic degree or professional title, but who have made outstanding contributions to scientific research or education. In addition, Zhang (2022) believed that university talents generally have certain professional qualities and skills in a given field or discipline, high academic attainments, divergent and creative thinking, innovative ability and excellent comprehensive quality, and have achievements that are recognised and affirmed by researchers in the same field.

Zhang and Zhang (2021) took institutional text as the entry point to illustrate how official institutions purposefully and consciously construct the process and practice deviation of university teachers' talent identification from three aspects: symbolic intention, text

interpretation, and realistic implication. The authors argued that the texts of the honour system for university teachers reflect the strategic consciousness of the national and local governments and universities to reserve high-end talents, which is of great significance in the Chinese context. Additionally, the study explained that the identification criteria can be identified from the title, among which the combination of 'distinguishing word + noun' is highly common, such as 'Nationwide Prominent Teacher' and 'National Education System Model Worker'. Among them, 'excellent', 'advanced', and 'outstanding' are used to attach a high hierarchical level to teachers who have won the title. 'Model' and 'famous' represent the establishment of a typical model and provide a learning example for teachers.

When universities recruit talents, title screening is typically used to identify the optimal candidates. Therefore, the recognition of symbols in talent identification has a certain rationality, and the honour system of university teachers and the inspiring environment it creates imbue honour symbols with legitimacy and credibility, which can indicate (to varying degrees) the past-academic accomplishments and development potential of university teachers (Hu & Yuan, 2021). Due to the high cost of complete information searches in talent identification, information asymmetry can likely occur between talents and universities, with the latter not fully understanding the academic level and potential of candidate teachers. To screen and introduce high-level talents, they often choose easy-to-identify 'titles' as a standard and link honour symbols with ideal personality traits (Lu & Chen, 2014). However, the majority of talents have yet to be honoured in the academic field, meaning that they should not be regarded as being of a low level. If teachers are evaluated by excessive reference to symbols, it is easy for the phenomenon of 'only titles' evaluation to emerge (Jiang & Wang, 2021). Talent identification relies solely on explicit indicators, such as papers, projects, and graduate schools, without in-depth thinking and long-term strategies for future development potential and team understanding, which leads to the short-term interests and blind stimulation of talent recruitment, thus hindering any long-term impacts (Cao, 2019).

There is evidence to suggest that identifying university talents should take into account the environment, such as scarcity and demand, and should not be seen as an absolute assessment (Zhang & Pang, 2020). Zhang (2017) pointed out that the identification of university talents is relative and dynamic, and should be decided by market comparison. Further, it is necessary to emphasise the importance of professional ethics, with certain model standards, in the

identification of university talents, as well as outstanding contributions to education, teaching, scientific research, and other fields, which play an important role in the establishment of universities and the training of personnel (Huang & Wang, 2015).

Research on factors affecting talent identification among university teachers includes two aspects. On the one hand, individual experience and self-cognition have key significance for their own identity transformation and construction (McAlpine, Amundsen and Turner, 2014), and such individual physiological factors as age, gender, race (Archer, 2008), and the nature of employment (Gu et al., 2021) all affect such talent identification. On the other hand, such situational factors as social history, culture, educational change, cultural traditions of discipline, and university organisational systems also affect the identification of university teachers (Zhang, 2018). In particular, the impact of higher education reform on the construction of talent identification, such as the reform of university competitive employment system, academic championship system (Yan, 2012), and double first-class construction (Huang & Wang, 2020), has been a focus of current research. Under the guise of managerialism, higher education organisations have started to reform the quantitative management and appointment system, which has served to transform the commercialisation and production mode of knowledge (Wang, 2021). The academic tournament system gradually narrates competitions and rankings into scientific research outputs (Lu & Chen, 2014), so that the external expectation of talents is biased towards highly-productive researchers. When there is a difference between internal concept and external expectation, only university talents review and weigh various factors, and base choices on their own temperaments and personality independence (Rong, 2019). The result of choice is to adhere to, change, or relinquish the original internal concept. Therefore, the matching degree between talent's inner concept and external expectations is a key and challenging point of TM.

Han and Xie (2022) proposed a structured way of thinking and analysis framework for talent identification, and divided complex and implicit identification into four types. However, this analytical framework must be considered dynamically. The internal concept and external expectations of university talents are constantly changing – as are the forces of professionalism and managerialism – thus blurring, and even transforming, the identification type.

3.7.2 Talent Attraction

The attraction of talent is one of the most important success factors in higher education (Mohammed et al., 2018). To enhance the concentration of top scientists and create a high-quality talent system, universities are constantly increasing their demand for talents in order to compete for top-university status (Mensch, 2020). High-level talents have become key figures within the visions of universities (Jarvin and Subotnik, 2015). Due to the long growth cycle of talents and the difficulties involved in developing them, attracting elite talents has become a primary demand for universities to become stronger (Giuri *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, the attraction of talent to universities is widely regarded as a positive development trend and important strategic choice (Zeng, 2021).

The concept of talent attraction refers to the management strategy that employers use to attract qualified talent into their organisations in order to find the most suitable candidates (Songa & Oloko, 2016). This process involves a number of aspects, including recruitment and selection, employer branding, employee value propositioning, and choices of both employer and employee (Rop & Kwasira, 2015).

In the academic world, through research from different perspectives of higher education, educational management, and HRM, university talent attraction research has primarily centred on three aspects:

(1) From the perspective of TM system design and planning, studies have discussed whether the university should develop the talent plan based on their demand, whether the specific attraction form is connected to the talent group type, as well as good practices of talent attraction (García-Peñalvo et al., 2022; Eghbal et al. 2017). For example, a flexible working schedule is an important strategy that HR departments should consider in order to attract key talent (Onken-Menke, Nüesch and Kröll, 2018). A financial rewards package is a significant job attraction factor. For example, Schlechter et al. (2014) tested the effectiveness of remuneration, employee benefits, and variable pay. Furthermore, employer branding involves a combined set of activities that assist an organisation in attracting the greatest number of prospective employees in different cultures (Alnıaçık *et al.*, 2014), and Botha et al. (2011) built a predictive model for talent attraction and retention.

(2) From the perspective of the influence of talent attraction, prior research has summarised the main modes and influences of talent attraction (Dahshan et al., 2018; Mok & Chan, 2020; Dahshan et al., 2018). Talent attraction has overwhelming been considered as capable of improving an organisation's competitive advantage (Magbool *et al.*, 2016). A study conducted on public university campuses in Nakuru county government confirmed the influence of talent attraction on organisational performance (Rop & Kwasira, 2015).

(3) From the perspective of the talent attraction mechanism, studies have focused on collaborative and evaluation (Tatto, 2015). Aside from focusing on the introduction and education of talent, the cooperation of universities, research institutes, and enterprises (Philbin, 2008; Calcagnini *et al.*, 2016). It also emphasises the difference between innovative talents, and builds a scientific classification and evaluation system (Eghbal *et al.*, 2017).

China's desire for talents has been reflected in the change and development of its universities, which reached a new level after the implementation of the national talent power strategy (Xiao, 2019). Cai (2013) believed that different countries and organisations attract different people, and essentially decided upon what kind of TM system and operating mechanism to engage in. It is important to determine which kind of TM system and mechanism is more beneficial to talent, value, and attraction.

In view of the existing research on talent attraction of Chinese universities, studies have held that the talent plan of universities is generally formulated by the HR department on the basis of the preliminary suggestions of colleges, and the major concern is the comprehensive development goal (Wang et al., 2004). However, a greater emphasis is placed on quickly increasing the number of talents, while less attention is given to the implementation of long-term plans, the effectiveness of talent introduction, and in-depth analyses of talent structures (Wu, 2015). Research has generally noted that universities lack attraction, incentive policies are similar, investment is limited, and it is difficult to establish outstanding advantages (Li, 2019; Xu, 2004). Young teachers generally face greater life and work pressures, and they tend to pay greater attention to whether universities can provide relocation expenses, housing, research start-up expenses, and other preferential conditions.

The contradictions between public welfare and market law, fairness and efficiency of education, internal reform requirements and external objective conditions, growing demand and limited input, talent internationalisation and retention, and input and output, among others. It is these contradictions that hinder and constrain the work of introducing talents in universities (He & Tang, 2020). Wang (2017) considered that universities pay too much attention to talents' educational background, professional title, and scientific research achievements, but ignore personal quality, teaching level, and practical ability. Lin et al. (2021) paid greater attention to attracting global cross-culture talents, and believed that the contribution methods of overseas talents are diversified and the current performance appraisal system cannot fully reflect the contribution of imported talents. The authors further argued that the external environment for attracting overseas talents should be optimised (with governmental and societal support), the scientific research environment is not ideal, and university services have yet to be implemented.

From the perspective of talent needs, Wu (2011) found some commonalities in the demands of university teachers, such as strong material needs, personal development needs, humanistic care needs, and information sharing needs. There were also certain differences regarding material and spiritual needs based on age, gender, professional title, and educational background. Wei (2011) investigated and studied the professional resilience of teachers in universities, and found such resilience and professional identity to be low in local universities. According to a survey conducted by Jiang and Liu (2017), of 150 PhD holders, talents were most concerned about salary, living security, and the welfare system. Moreover, there is a lack of innovation in the channels for attracting talents and traditional recruitment methods are becoming increasingly difficult to use – especially the narrow channels for attracting overseas talent – which have not been actively expanded by universities (Wang, 2017). Talents' employment choices could be greatly affected by the supporting measures once they have been attracted and developed over time – which represents an important challenge for universities (Lin et al., 2021). Besides, high scientific research assessment, teaching and research workload, and low self-value realisation are also the main factors considered by university talents (Huang et al., 2022).

Due to certain limitations, prior research has suffered from the following research deficiencies: More studies have been conducted on the phenomenon of talent attraction, but fewer on the

theory of talent attraction; there is a greater volume of research on the attraction of local talents than on overseas talents; science and engineering talents have been more widely studies than their counterparts in the humanities and social sciences; much research has been conducted into talent attraction strategies, with comparatively few on post-attraction development; and more research has explored the hard conditions of talent attraction, with the soft environment being somewhat neglected.

In conclusion, talent attraction planning, talent attraction models, and talent introduction mechanisms have been emphasised to facilitate the investigation of university talent attraction activities. However, deep relationship analyses appear notably absent, and different types and regions of universities have not been compared. This study seeks to fill these research gaps, and reveal the motivation, behaviours, and attitudes of talent attraction actors in local universities.

3.7.3 Talent Retention

There is more to turnover of talent than the mere fact that it can be a costly process (Craig, 2015). For many organisations, talent retention is viewed as a strategic opportunity for maintaining a competitive workforce (Oladapo, 2014), and it refers to an organisation's efforts to keep its employees for as long as possible (Anitha, 2016). The internationalisation of higher education is resulting in an increase in the mobility of academics. Indeed, the scarcity of talent is shifting its importance from the periphery to the centre. The flow of talents in universities often presents such a phenomenon: Talents gather and flow to universities with more resources, higher platforms, and more established reputations, while other universities, especially those in less developed areas, are often faced with the 'brain drain' dilemma (Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2018). The flow of talent is conducive to the optimal allocation of resources, to the development of healthy competition, and the advancement of university reform (Zhou, Guo and Liu, 2018). However, organisations in less-developed areas are at a disadvantage when it comes to attracting and retaining talent (Monk, 2007).

Due to the negative effects of brain drain, it is an important part of the research on talent retention in universities. Three reasons behind these effects are summarised below, namely macro-social level reasons, middle-university level reasons, and micro-individual level reasons. Identifying these reasons could provide a deeper understanding of university talent retention.

(1) Macro-social level reasons. In this context, the theory of migration (Lee, 1966) contributes the theoretical basis to this category of research, and a number of studies have applied and extended this theory to study and explain population mobility and talent flow. According to this theory, the disadvantages and advantages presented by the outflow and inflow regions are the thrust and pull of population flow. The disadvantages and deficiencies of less-developed areas in terms of natural geographical environments (Jacob and Atobauka, 2021), regional economic development (Zhou, Guo and Liu, 2018), social and cultural environments (Welch and Zhen, 2008), and talent policies (Leng, 2002) contribute significantly to the brain drain of universities. Depending on the region, different factors are expected. Indeed, Zhao et al. (2016) found that those S&T talents in the eastern provinces of China were expected to have an increased economic level and income, whereas those in the mid-west expected had more expectations of a better cultural and living environment.

(2) Middle-university level reasons. The attraction of universities to talents is one of the power sources that leads to the flow of talents in universities (Ou, 2013). According to the results of existing research on Chinese universities, the main reasons for the brain drain are the unreasonable talent management or evaluation system (Tian, 2006), the slow development of universities (Yi et al., 2008), and the high level of talent competition among universities (Xu & Jia, 2019).

(3) Micro-individual level reasons. Talent flows in universities may not be solely attributed to pure interest, but rather to the talents themselves. Anees et al. (2021) determined that job stress and workload had a significant impact on turnover intention, along with job satisfaction playing an important mediation role. There is a greater expectation of career success, self-awareness, spiritual pursuit, and the psychological need for a better life among university talents. This could explain why the majority of university talents base their professional choices on their spiritual pursuit of higher career expectations and self-awareness (Liang, 2018).

Research on Chinese universities has tended to prioritise macro-social level influences. In order to curb irrational competition in the talent market of universities and improve the imbalance in the spatial distribution of talent resources, the Chinese government has issued

a series of measures. For example, in 2017, the Ministry of Education issued the policy of 'Adhering to the correct orientation to promote the rational and orderly flow of high-level talents in colleges and universities', thus discouraging the introduction of talents from the central, western and north-eastern regions. In 2019, the state council once again explicitly supported the central and western regions in maintaining a stable talent pool, stating that developed regions (especially those from the centre and west) should not be allowed to recruit talent through competitive bidding with high salaries and benefits. A set of measures aimed at curbing the outflow of talents was issued by the Ministry of Education in December 2021, which involved cancelling the talent titles and providing financial support to universities in the western and central regions during the employment period for high-level talents.

Scholars have also studied the phenomenon of brain drain and university talent retention, and proposed several opinions. Wang (2019) argued that the competition for talents in Chinese universities has destroyed the order of talent allocation, and talent resources tend not to flow to the most needed and suitable places. Considering the market bidding power of high salaries, the competition for high-level talent resources has evolved into the competition for regional economic development strength. Universities in the central and western regions are at a natural disadvantage in terms of income, surrounding facilities, and scientific research, thus rendering them uncompetitive. Meanwhile, it aggravates the perfidy of talents, and it is common to arbitrarily terminate employment contracts to achieve job-hopping, which contradicts the original purpose of jointly developing universities and talents (Wang, 2019). Additionally, Shen (2006) argued that Chinese universities are transitioning from administrative to contractual management systems. Moreover, some have stated that talent has become a scarce resource for universities, which changes the identity of weak workers in the traditional sense in that they are afforded more autonomy in the employment relationship, and even provides them with negotiating strength equal to that of universities (Zheng, 2018). In the academic market, human resources are in short supply and universities have lost their original advantageous position in the buyer's market. Talent is therefore available, and the employment relationship between talent and universities has changed substantially.

In the middle-university level, Wang (2019) re-explained the employment relationship between universities and talents on the basis of defining the scope of university talents and the nature of employment contracts, and proposed that the flow of university talents could

be alleviated by means of the contract paradigm. Wang (2019) further argued that the existing incentive mechanism, classification management, and assessment system, the incomplete implementation of supporting policies (e.g., professional title awarding and visiting for further study), as well as improper coordination and communication between management and service departments, and administrative affairs may hinder university talents from investing in teaching and scientific research, meeting the needs of university talents, and finally retaining talents. Gao et al. (2010) proposed that universities should form an open and shared atmosphere for scientific research, create good working conditions for talents, and provide scientific research services according to the academic level and development potential of the prospective talents. Guo (2011) discussed the influence of the institutionalised background of rule construction on the development of teachers in universities, pointing out that both the socialisation and professionalisation processes are inseparable from the institutional environment, and universities and teachers influence each other in the jointly constructed rule system.

Considering the characteristics and psychological needs of university talents at the micro-individual level, Liu (2011) discussed the main problems in the incentive mechanism of universities and their causes, as well as how to meet talent needs and build psychological contracts. Jia (2009) focused on the pressure and motivation of university teachers, as well as the internal and external causes of such pressure, so as to improve talent retention. In addition, Zhu (2019) argued that only when teachers' own emotions are recognised and fully addressed can universities achieve overall fit and common development. At the same time, such recognition is also an important path for university talent development. Wang and Zhu (2019) opposed the idea of constructing hierarchies for human development processes and specifying individual development criteria. In their view, the subjectivity of teachers tends to yield in the face of external evaluations, such as teaching and research performance, evaluation, recruitment, and promotion. In comparison with individual academic interests and professional goals, university teachers must prioritise meeting the university's evaluation requirements, which is the real factor affecting talent retention.

Zhang and Zhang (2021) argued that the university teacher honour system plays a positive role in academic achievements, and the honorary title (as a symbol of power and resources) also promotes the abnormal flow of honorary teachers to a certain extent. University teachers

are employees engaged in different types of knowledge production activities on the basis of their specialisations. They tend to pay more attention to spiritual pursuits based on (Love, 2019), and are more eager to be recognised by their peers, leaders, and students (Brundrett, Burton and Smith, 2003). Honour symbols serve in the role of spiritual reward, and their recognition functions make teachers feel the reward of labour, and bring a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction to excellent teachers. Therefore, affording significance to honour symbols can aid talent retention.

3.7.4 Talent Development

Research has shown that the development of university teachers is a dynamic process. Based on studies within the literature, there are several research streams on talent development in universities: (1) Talent development is considered an activity that aims to improve faculty members' abilities, especially their teaching capabilities and skill levels (e.g., Boice, 1991; Joyce et al., 1973). In this perspective, talent development is somewhat synonymous with promoting teachers' teaching improvement. (2) Talent development is viewed as an integrated and comprehensive process, including multiple content dimensions, and is regarded as being related to faculty, organisational, and personal development (Berquist & Phillips, 1975; Miller, 2011). (3) It is believed that the development of university teachers not only refers to the activities that help teachers complete multiple roles, but also includes the comprehensive development of teachers, covering the development of each stage of their careers (e.g., Gilles & Wilson, 2004; Lai-Yeung, 2014).

Berquist and Phillips (1977) considered university development and talent to be interrelated, meaning that university teachers' development is closely correlated with the institutional environment of the organisation in which they are located, and university teachers must be supported and recognised by external institutional environments in order to develop. Gappa (2007) developed a framework for enhancing the academic productivity of teachers and promoting their professional development. The framework included five core elements: equality of employment, academic freedom, autonomy, flexibility, professional development, and common governance. It provides a tool for analysing the interaction between individual needs, organisational assistance, and the institutional environment in relation to faculty development in higher education.

Despite the increasing attention and recognition devoted to the theory and practice of talent development in universities, numerous studies (involving experience summaries and critical reflections) have been conducted into specific aspects of teacher development in schools, regions, or countries. There are many issues associated with modern teacher development projects in China, including the lack of goals (especially those related to the university's mission), the absence of evaluation and feedback, and the low level of teacher participation (Zeichner and Liu, 2010). Gillespie et al. (2001) summarised the experience of talent development in universities, in which teachers are encouraged to actively participate in formal goal-oriented projects and are provided with external funding for financial support. Timperley (2008) concluded that the majority of people form a relatively stable system and structure for self-development within their work, and that university talent development is an aspect of teachers' self-development which can be highly difficult to change. Therefore, there is still a gap between the actual effect and expected results in talent development in universities. Researchers have found that high-performing teachers are more likely to participate in teacher development programmes, while those who require more assistance are less likely to capitalise upon such programmes. There is a significant difference between the number of excellent teachers who participate in talent development programmes and the number of teachers who more urgently need them. In light of this, universities should devote greater attention to assisting the talents who require it (Boyle and Boice, 1998). For instance, new teachers tend not to fully understand the content of teaching work and display deficiencies in certain areas, resulting in difficulties and inadaptability in their early careers (Wulff et al., 2004).

Moreover, researchers have empirically examined the regular disparity between the vision of university teachers and the reality of their careers (e.g., Bagilhole & Goode, 2001; Kelchtermans, 1993; MacPhail et al., 2019; Voss & Kunter, 2020). The reasons behind this include performance expectations (particularly the teaching, research, social service, and other outcomes that are required for tenure to be granted), collegial relationships, and the ability to maintain a balance between professional and personal responsibilities. As part of faculty career development, it is especially important to make an effective start, excel in teaching and research, navigate the tenure track, build a strong network of colleagues and professionals, and maintain a healthy work–life balance (Austin, Sorcinelli and McDaniels,

2007). Thus, university leaders should provide assistance to teachers in addressing these issues, taking the corresponding responsibility, and participating in their success throughout their careers. Moreover, teachers should learn how to actively communicate and give feedback about the strategies and measures in order to receive more support from the organisation (Bowen and Shapiro, 2016).

In China, Xie (2004) was the first to use the concept of university talent development in his research, with previous researchers having mainly used concepts relating to university teacher training, team construction, and TM. The purpose of this related research was generally to provide an historical review, an experience summary, a description of problems and causes, future development trends, and policy recommendations related to the construction of university teaching staff. However, there has been a significant increase in the number of studies since then, such as Shi's (2012) research on the widespread use of talent development in universities as a result of promoting academia.

These studies centred primarily on the following three aspects:

(1) Discussion on the concept of university talent development.

Pan (2007) analysed the concept of talent development in universities, and came to the conclusion that it should be based on the subjectivity of teachers (i.e., their autonomy and individuality) rather than simply accepting the norms from external societies and organisations. All university teachers should be included in development programmes through various methods of training and practice in order to continually improve their professional and academic level, as well as their teaching knowledge and skills. Lin (2006) proposed university talent specialisation conditions in the belief that university teacher development involves the guarantee of individual professional independence and security as well as career planning and professional autonomy. Having studied the connotations and characteristics of academic career ladders and their impact, Bie (2012) concluded that the closed operations of academic career ladder systems based on institutions were detrimental to the development of university teachers.

(2) A comparative study of talent development in universities.

Research in this field has also included comparative studies of faculty development across different countries. Focusing on the content, state, and mode of development, Wu (2010) examined the development of teachers in American universities. The study emphasised the importance of scientific research, teaching, active development, important passive development, individual development, and organisational development, and identified self-direction, practice, and informal cooperation as the three primary development modes. Chen (2009) examined the current conditions and development processes of university teachers in China and the UK from a comparative research and analysis perspective on the five dimensions of policy, concept, organisation, management model, incentive mechanism, and project implementation. According to Meng (2007) and Chen (2009), faculty development in Japanese universities can be divided into three parts: improvement of abilities, evaluation, and reform. They argued that Japan's system can be characterised by appropriate macro-control policies, professional advisory bodies, and strong competitive consciousness in universities. Huang (2006) elaborated on the content and main modes of university TM on the basis of an international comparison analysis of the development background and problems of China's higher education. He pointed out that the UK and US' TM is departmental-dominated, Germany's university-dominated, France's government-dominated, and Japan's individual-dominated. In contrast, China was found to have a leadership-dominated mode.

(3) Discussion on the policy and strategy of talent development in universities.

Wu (2007) examined the system of faculty management in Chinese universities by evaluating the characteristics and deficiencies of the policies from the standpoints of policy concept, policy value orientation, and policy motivation. He concluded that administrative authority in Chinese universities is far greater than that of academic authority, suggesting that the academic power of university teachers could be improved upon in future. Song (2003) analysed the self-development of academic personnel in universities using the elements of self-goal positioning, self-resource allocation, self-motivation, self-restraint, and the construction of an academic ecological environment, and presented a strategy for implementing academic management in universities to promote self-development. To develop university

educators, Xie (2007) asserted that it is necessary to change how teachers are conceptualised, and to respect their individuality and autonomy. To develop more resources for talent development, not only schools, but also the government and educational management departments, should provide support. Shi (2012) also emphasised the importance of government influence in the development of university teachers, but noted that government power and responsibilities should be transferred to universities in order to allow them a greater role in the development of university teachers.

Furthermore, based on existing research results, an increasing number of studies have been conducted on the ideological values (e.g., Deem & Brehony, 2005; Lee & Lee, 2013; Uzuner-Smith & Englander, 2015; Whittington, 2020), ethics (e.g., Farahani & Farahani, 2014; Keenan, 2015; Li et al., 2020; Stevens et al., 1993), work pressure (e.g., Adeoti et al., 2020; Fairweather & Beach, 2002; Meng & Wang, 2018; Muhammad et al., 2022), physical and psychological conditions (e.g., Akour et al., 2020; Anderson & Slade, 2016; Smith et al., 1995; Yan et al., 2015), work-family conflict (e.g., Sorcinelli & Near, 1989; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012; Winefield et al., 2014; Zábrodská et al., 2018), teaching development (e.g., Kamel, 2016; Kim & Lundberg, 2016; Saroyan & Amundsen, 2004; Sorcinelli, 1994), professional development (e.g., Ebert-May et al., 2011; McKee et al., 2013; Sunal et al., 2001; Wynants & Dennis, 2018), and career satisfaction of university teachers (e.g., August & Waltman, 2004; Cerci & Dumludag, 2019; Lunsford et al., 2018; Mudrak et al., 2018).

3.8 Conclusion

While the concept of TM has existed for roughly 20 years, it has recent become an increasingly important topic of research, both academically and in practice. However, in terms of talent and TM, there is little consensus about what both of these terms actually mean, and various definitions have been provided by both researchers and practitioners in different ways and in a variety of contexts. This chapter has covered the entire history of TM, defined talent and TM with respect to the Chinese context, and explained how TM continues on, but differs from, traditional HRM. Drawing on human capital theory, talent is strategic human capital essential to organisational success and sustainable competitive advantages, which reflects its core competitiveness due to its specificity, according to RBV.

Current TM research has been predominantly based on solid practical foundations and motivations, although there is plenty of theoretical research as well. Much research has been conducted on TM in organisations, regions, and countries, or a summary of relevant experiences, yet the majority has focused on a specific aspect. These studies have yielded more problem- and action-oriented results due to their primary concern with evaluating and analysing existing TM attempts. The research results have also provided a valuable basis from which to improve follow-up work, and have strong realistic pertinence and operability. This research logic has provided ample ideas and referential methods for my thesis.

The mainstream concepts of talent and TM come from Western research. As a result, the research on talent resources and TM by Chinese scholars is mainly explanatory and introductory, yet they have gone to great lengths to enrich the theoretical system of TM in China through empirical research and, in the process, suggest and improve upon issues and defects in the development of enterprises.

There are, however, many research deficiencies and research gaps as well:

First, there is insufficient research on TM in the Chinese context, with the majority of research having focused on the West. Scholars have yet to embed research into the Chinese context, meaning that the context and mechanisms that impact the effectiveness of TM in Chinese enterprises have been left unexplored. Chinese TM research also shares a common language, which would make it easier to provide contributions to the research field. Current research in the Chinese context has mainly focused on talent policies at the national level, and there are few specific studies on enterprises, organisations, and such industries as universities.

Second, current TM research is mainly theoretical and there is no unified systematic theoretical consensus. At present, the understanding of TM has mainly been sourced from Western scholars, among which the research results that can achieve consensus have mainly focused on the expression of performance improvement and sustained competitive advantage, while there is no unified view on the concept connotation and architectures of TM. Indeed, the overemphasis on the value of TM has led its value to be beyond question.

Third, most TM studies have analysed and offered suggestions from the perspective of managers, but lack objective and in-depth analysis based on the needs of talents.

Four, there is a lack of comparative research on university TM. At present, most of the comparative studies in China are between countries, with the main purpose of learning from the experience of Western universities rather than differentiating between universities of different natures and levels.

Chapter 4 Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the focus centers on elucidating the rationale behind the chosen research design and methodology employed for both data collection and analysis. The organizational structure of this chapter adheres to the research onion model proposed by Saunders et al. (2015). Section 4.2 elucidates the ontological and epistemological approach, as well as the theoretical perspectives underpinning this research. The decision to adopt a qualitative research approach is expounded upon in Section 4.3. Subsequently, Section 4.4 introduces the research design, justifying the utilization of the case study method and providing an explanation for the selection of P University and N University (with due respect to their anonymity as per university guidelines). Additionally, I detail the process of gaining access to the case universities and outline the contextual background of both institutions. Section 4.5 delves into the data analysis methodology, encompassing in-depth interviews, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, and thematic analysis.

Finally, Section 4.6 offers insights into strategies aimed at enhancing the validity and reliability of this research, along with a discussion of ethical considerations that have been taken into account throughout the research process.

4.2 Philosophical Orientation

4.2.1 Ontology and epistemology

Many issues in scientific research need to be described, explained and analysed from a philosophically-grounded on ontology and epistemology of the given research perspective (Bunge and Bunge, 1996) because this provides a means of reflection and self-awareness (Benton and Craib, 2010) at the level of a theoretical underpinnings of this research. Only by clarifying the decisions that affect the research results can social science research be interpreted meaningfully (Moon and Blackman, 2014). Therefore, it is crucial for researchers to understand relevant philosophical positions and clarify their philosophical orientation at the beginning of their research. Then the method of data collection must be unified at the level of ontology, epistemology and methodology (Scotland, 2012; Schurz, 2013), otherwise,

logical problems and even misreading are inevitable, which entirely undermine the original intention of the study (Holden and Lynch, 2004). Therefore, the personal ontological and epistemological decisions and choices of a researcher affect their choice of data collection methods and finally determine the contribution to theory. If researchers fully understand their own ontological and epistemological standpoints, they will adopt the philosophical paradigm which best corresponds to their study, enabling the results and possible influences of scientific research to be examined more systematically and objectively (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020).

Ontology is the nature of 'being' or reality (Denzin & Lincoln,2008), which is defined by human thinking (Patton, 2002). As far as research is concerned, ontology reflects what is the 'nature' pursued by a research, or how researchers understand the 'nature of reality' (Yin, 2009). With regard to the nature of reality, there are distinct views and one of such view is whether reality is independent of human thought (e.g., Dummett & Dummett, 2006; Kastrup, 2019; Rafanell & Sawicka, 2020; etc.). Some researchers regard nature as something objective and unique, which exists outside the mind (Tuli, 2010). These researchers typically pursue accuracy, regularity and reproducibility within a quantitative research framework (Jean Lee, 1992), an approach characterised by its search for an objective and unique truth and essential world (e.g., Powell, 2020; Zyphur & Pierides, 2017; etc.). However, other researchers argue that nature does not exist outside the mind (e.g., Gaudet & Robert, 2018; Krauss, 2015; etc.), instead, it is formed by the subject in an ongoing, temporal process (Harman, 2018), and cannot be separated from the manifestation of facts or the perceiving subject (Sovacool, Axsen and Sorrell, 2018), so there is no so-called objective, unique and external reality and truths (e.g., Moon et al., 2019; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).

This research assumes that reality is not external and objective (Johnson and Duberley, 2000), but is situational and subjective (Mohajan, 2018). Reality is not single (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012) and transcendental (Partington, 2002), nor it is artificially constructed (Meredith *et al.*, 1989), and more than that, it does not exist without human attention; it is constantly changing, and thus need to be discovered continuously. This study also acknowledge the influence of the researcher on the research results, and emphasise the "interaction" and "explanatory understanding" between the researcher and the subject (Chiu *et al.*, 2010; Azungah, 2018). In this research, I consider myself the research tool, and I use a variety of data collection methods to examine TM in Chinese universities comprehensively.

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This is inevitably influenced by subjective cognition, therefore, this study is more inclined to show the reality under subjective consciousness.

Epistemology, which refers to the study of the nature of knowledge, is not optional, but affects the quality of research (Stodulka, Selim and Mattes, 2018). It refers more broadly to the origin, nature and extent of knowledge (Angle and Perry, 1981), and one of its thematic focuses is the relationship between belief, learning and knowledge (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Epistemology deals with how people perceive the truth (Montero, 2002). People are independent individuals with consciousness, and to take this into account, scholars have focused on how people view and interpret the world around us (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012). Hanson (1958) proposed the theory-ladenness of observation, while Kuhn (2012) highlights individual differences.

According to Moon & Blackman (2014), in Objectivism, an objective reality exists in an object independent of the subject, while subject imposes meaning on an object in subjectivism, and constructionism in social science means meanings are created from interplay between the subject and object, namely subject constructs reality of object. This research followed the stance that the reality's meaning making is the activities of individuals' minds. Therefore, the basic proposition of this research is to establish practice-based intersubjectivity, and thereby achieve the coordination and integration of objectivism and subjectivism. The nature of social reality is contextualised actions and interpretation (Gumperz, 1992); the world, therefore, is a product of the meanings and knowledge people bring to it. As storytellers, humans are subjects, constructors and enactors (Benjamin and Zohn, 1963).

Induction is mainly used to analyse data and form theories, and interpretative understanding is obtained through interaction with research objects to construct their behaviors and meanings (Welch *et al.*, 2020). Deduction involves combining existing information by following specific mental operations (Goswami, 2002). Although both deductive and inductive arguments are used frequently, and they are equally compelling and persuasive (Hollihan and Baaske, 2015). However, the inductive category of human reasoning functions to provide a closer understanding of the meanings which individuals attach to and therefore emphasise the role of the researcher as part of the research process (Rojon and Saunders, 2012). This demonstrates that qualitative research is no less precise, though it often involves a more

inductive process, and this research truly believes.

4.2.2 Research paradigm / Theoretical perspectives

Given the above interpretation of ontology and epistemology, this study will focus on the meaning making of people's mind. As a researcher, I am also a part of the research, and through my interactions with the respondents, the social reality or the situation is created and therefore there is no absolute truth but multiple truths. In other words, I have been constructing the social reality mentally in the process of reading materials, determining the research focus, questions to be asked from the respondents, and analysing data etc. Therefore, I am faced with a dilemma: if the social reality is constructed by social actors, the researchers have also constructed the reality in the process of research, then this social reality is no longer the one the researchers intended to study. In this case, Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) suggest the following formula: first, there is a social reality, and researchers can study it independently; second, researchers participate in the construction of parts of the research process. This problem can also be framed as two questions. If there is a social reality, can people know it and understand it? Or how can people understand or measure this social reality? These are the questions that epistemology should solve. The answers to these questions primarily take two distinct directions: positivism and interpretivism.

First of all, positivists have repurposed methods originally used in natural science to conduct social science (Gerard, 2005), presupposing that everything can be observed or measured. It presents the philosophy of ontology and epistemology of positivism is realism, which is reality can be understood by using appropriate methods. Positivists tend to focus on deductive methods to verify theories, and also establish theories. Researchers find gaps in existing studies (Matusov *et al.*, 2019), develop new theoretical conjectures through logical deduction, and then test the theoretical hypotheses through quantitative research methods of positivism (Zyphur and Pierides, 2017).

Contrary to positivism, interpretivism believes that the world is constructed by human society, and social phenomena do not exist independently of our interpretation (Schwandt, 1994). The research philosophy of ontology interpretivism is relativism, means that multiple realities exist and mental constructions make sense. Interpretivism opposes the use of numbers to explain the world, instead arguing that the real world and behavior are jointly constructed and

explained by researchers and research participants. The research process involves researchers deeply exploring the world of the research participants, observing with the eyes of the research participants, and thinking about the external world in their terms. The researchers and the research participants jointly construct the context and the reality. Therefore, in qualitative research under the guidance of interpretivism, the values of researchers and research participants interact and are interrelated, in stark contrast to the approach of positivism, in which values are independent and do not interact. According to the framework of interpretivism, interpretation and meaning are the keys to social science research (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020), social science should explore how people understand the world (Chowdhury, 2014), and the researchers themselves conduct the research activities in a specific discourse (Furlong *et al.*, 2017). As a result of this orientation, interpretivism focuses on social actors' understanding of the 'meaning' of actions (Packard, 2017), the use of language, the impact of culture and context, as well as comparison. Moreover, the interpretivist framework denies the importance of direct empirical observation, as meaning, discourse and relevant other concepts are often internalised. Therefore, interpretivists try to understand the subjective view of the subject, that is, what social reality looks like through the eyes of the subject (Leitch, Hill and Harrison, 2010). Researchers should immerse themselves in real-life contexts to understand, explain and reconstruct concepts and meanings through scientific means and language, a process which is more akin to translating research participants, rather than speaking for them (Goldkuhl, 2012). To achieve this, methods such as in-depth interviews and participatory observation are used (Lin, 1998).

Due to the emphasis on 'interpretation', qualitative research under the guidance of interpretivism is more compatible with the humanities, and this affinity is reflected in the increasing use of this framework within contemporary social science (Ritchie et al., 2013; Collis & Hussey, 2013). First, qualitative research data doesn't directly describe an observable empirical reality but is intertwined with the discourse background within that reality. Ormston, et al. (2014) stated that the data collected in qualitative research does not describe an empirical reality that can be directly observed, but relates to the discourse background embedded in the empirical reality. In the context of this study, it emphasizes the need to delve into the underlying discourse surrounding the phenomena. It suggests that understanding how research participants define and perceive the social environment is crucial to grasp the

nuances of the subject matter.

Second, the research process must reflect the interaction between researchers and research participants (Bourke, 2014). This implies that the researchers should be aware of their influence on the research process and recognize the impossibility of complete control over participants. Acknowledging this interaction becomes essential for maintaining the integrity of the study. The emphasis on prioritizing the discourse system followed by participants aligns with the need to reduce the risk of self-deception during the research.

Third, the research conclusion is not an absolute 'objective law', but only a relative, partial interpretation and re-interpretation, based on a specific context (Thelwall, 2006). In the context of this study, it implies that the conclusions drawn should be seen as interpretations rather than universally applicable truths. It encourages a nuanced understanding of the research findings, considering the context within which they were derived.

Given the previous reasons on the chosen ontology and epistemology, interpretivism seems more appropriate for this study, and the position of my research is skewed towards the interpretivism paradigm. There is no doubt that it is more appropriate for emphasising the involvement and subjective process of interpretation involved in understanding and making sense of phenomena. Within the framework of my research aim, interpretivism will enable a nuanced examination of the subjective experiences, meanings, and perspectives within the realms of talent or leadership as examined in this study. It facilitates a comprehensive exploration of the Chinese context, contributing to a profound contextual understanding. Moreover, this methodology proves particularly beneficial when grappling with intricate and multifaceted issues. By focusing on the subjective experiences of individuals, interpretivism becomes instrumental in capturing a spectrum of diverse perspectives and meanings associated with the research aim. Consequently, it yields insights specifically tailored to the distinctive context of Chinese universities.

4.3 Research Choice: Qualitative research

In "The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), the concept of qualitative research is described as a situational activity that places observers in the real world. It consists of a series of interpretive and materialised practical activities aimed at making the

world manifest. These activities transform the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photos, records or self-memos. On this level, qualitative research necessitates an explanatory, naturalistic approach to the world, which means that qualitative researchers try to understand or explain phenomena according to the meaning given to them by the subjects under study. A comparison of different definitions (Weber, 1978; Wiersma *et al.*, 1995; Creswell and Poth, 2016), reveals four keywords that are particularly for the qualitative research paradigm: context, meaning, interpretation and subjectivity. This study chose qualitative research as research approach based on these four points:

Context. Qualitative research emphasises that things do not exist in isolation, but in the context of the real world, which includes time, space, history, culture, politics, community, interpersonal and other elements (Suzuki *et al.*, 2007). Things are meaningful in the context of their connections with other things. People live in a web of meaning that they have woven (Weber, 1978), Geertz (2008) calls this network of meanings "culture". The theme of this research is talent management in universities in the context of China, and the discussion of cultural background is elaborated in detail in Chapter 2. The qualitative method is more suitable for my research, because it enables me to develop an explanatory understanding of talent management, better express the bearing of Chinese culture on the research question, and understand how individuals take other behaviors into account in the process of giving meaning to actions. Instead of trying to simplify complex phenomena into a set of relationships between several variables, this sudy examined social phenomena holistically by case study.

Meaning. In the view of qualitative researchers, any social reality obtains its meaning in a specific context; that is to say, it has meaning when in relation to other things (Taylor, 1973). Moreover, meaning itself is the object that qualitative research tries to explore, understand and explain. The qualitative researcher should grasp the meaning behind various artifacts, human behaviors and social phenomena in the context of culture. Although meaning is in the mind, the origin and importance of meaning comes from culture, because it is indeed created in culture. Universities are public organisations with public significance, and TM requires meaning to be negotiated and communicated. Because meaning is subjective and multiple, it is necessary for me to understand different experiences and meanings to answer my research question.

Interpretation. Qualitative research does not bring the words, behaviors and texts of the research objects to readers intact (Geertz, 2008), because these contents are often trivial, disorganised and even contradictory (Creswell and Poth, 2016). To respond effectively to this challenge, qualitative researchers need to peel off the more superficial layers of reality to reveal more fundamentally meaningful components. My intention is to explore the understandings of TM; however, different groups of people hold different opinions. It is, therefore, necessary to explore multiple experiences to reach a consensus, with the goal of extracting general and abstract theories from induction, collation and analysis based on the collected data. This approach enables acomparative 'substantive' analysis of phenomena (Legewie, 2013).

Subjectivity. The subjectivity of researchers not only exists, but is indispensable (Patton, 2014; Bryman, 2016). In addition, the subjectivity of the research object should be respected (Yin, 2009). In the view of qualitative researchers, the research object of social science is always related to people; no matter the kind of social phenomena, artifacts or social actions, people give them meaning. Since the world is constructed out of multiple realities (Schurz, 2013), the words and actions of people already contain an implicit, interpretative understanding of the world (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). Moreover, the process of qualitative research is the interactive construction between the research objects and the researcher. Qualitative researchers realise the integration of horizons to achieve understanding through dialogue and negotiation, which relates to both the research subjects (and their experience world) and the researcher (and their experience world) (Khaldi, 2017; Wertsch, 1993). This characterisation reflects the positions I hold in ontology and epistemology.

In addition, according to the literature, approximately 20% of empirical TM papers utilize a mixed methods approach (consisting of both quantitative and qualitative techniques). Moreover, 42% of empirical papers drew solely on quantitative data and if combines the mixed method papers that had a quantitative element, 56% of all empirically based papers drew upon quantitative data (McDonnell *et al.*, 2017). As McDonnell summarises, *"there was, therefore, a slightly higher proportional use of quantitative data. Given the recent nature of the field, it may be somewhat surprising that there wasn't a greater use of qualitative data"* *(pp. 89)*. Bridging this research gap was another reason I adopted the qualitative research

method.

As I see it, my qualitative research is not a process of obtaining data through interviews, observations and other tools, but is rather the process of establishing a trusting relationship with research objects and jointly constructing reality through equal dialogue (Schein, 1993). Therefore, the reality investigated in my qualitative research is not the construction of individual interviewees, but a reality constructed together with researchers, who need to grasp naive concepts through continuous dialogue. In other words, in-depth interviews and participatory observation methods are not just formal methodogies, but require researchers' paradigms to align with the goals of qualitative research more broadly (Musante (DeWalt) and DeWalt, 2010).

4.4 Research Design

There are several popular research designs that fall within interpretivism within the field of talent management: Narrative Research (e.g., Anlesinya & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020; Makram et al., 2017; Painter-Morland et al., 2019; etc.); Phenomenology (e.g., Dewi et al., 2021; Khanifar et al., 2020; Pillay et al., 2019; etc.); Grounded Theory (e.g., Nayak et al., 2018; Shikweni et al., 2019; Sivathanu & Pillai, 2019; etc.); Ethnography (e.g., Beamond et al., 2020; Daubner-Siva et al., 2018; Devaney et al., 2018; etc.); Case study (e.g., Johennesse & Chou, 2017; Thunnissen & Buttiens, 2017; van den Broek et al., 2018; etc.).

Narrative research enables researchers to transform their own experience into plot fragments with temporal significance (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). It has limitations; first of all, researchers need to have unique perception and a keen ability to identify problems (Hillel Lavian, 2015), which depends on the researchers' advanced theoretical insight; secondly, narrative analysis foregrounds the challenges of analysing and selecting a sample (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). It doesn't fit this research, because the aim of this research is not to connects events so that meanings emerge according to their temporal position their role in the overall story (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2013). **Phenomenology** is a method of discovery; knowledge is based on subjective knowledge, and it is always related to and cognitively constructed by the people involved (Sokolowski, 2000). The goal of phenomenology is to guide relevant individuals to reveal their knowledge and experience (Connelly, 2010). This method advocates directly grasp

and think about actual phenomena. **Ethnography** is a field investigation method which relies on fieldworks and uses participatory observation and in-depth interview to access social facts (John, 2000). However, it is difficult for me to conduct participatory observation to explore the meaning behind the phenomenon, and it requires researchers emersion in the context to collect thick description which can be time consuming, so this approach is not suitable for my research. **Grounded Theory** (GTM), which is receiving increasing attention, is an approach in which researchers deeply rooted in the soil of experience summarise and abstract a theory with universal applicability from facts. This method satisfies my desire to innovate and construct theory; however, it requires serendipity (Merton and Barber, 2011) and theoretical sensitivity (Heath and Cowley, 2004), which is "the ability to grasp empirical phenomena in theoretical terms" (Kelle, 2007, pp.141). Categorised according to ontology and epistemology, there are three schools of key GTM: Classic/Glaser GTM, which address the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp.2); Straussian GTM, which inductively derives theory from the study of the phenomenon it presents. This approach emphasises discovering, developing, and provisionally verifying theory through systematic data collection and analysis of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, pp.23); and Charmaz GTM, which constructs conceptual frameworks and theoretical analysis from data and subsequently checks theoretical interpretations (Charmaz, 2014, pp.343). According to classic grounded theory (Holton and Walsh, 2016), GTM can use both qualitative and quantitative data, which is the advantage of this approach. Although grounded theory increasingly represents an academic norm, and evidently has a great deal of potential, there are several challenges to using this approach. First, the processing progress of this method is relatively abstract, which is difficult for novices. Second, grasping the theory is time-consuming and requires pre-conscious processing (Charmaz, 2010). Therefore, researchers need to stimulate their cognition and pre-conscious processing through manual sorting, memory and classification procedures. Third, coding can only generate descriptions of concepts which lack sufficient theoretical sensitivity. Fourth, researchers may be tempted to collect an excessive amount of data simply because it is available. Based on the above considerations, it can be concluded that this approach does not suitable in my research.

Case studies are widely used in the field of social science research. There are two viewpoints on the definition of case study: the first holds that a case is a special event, and conclusions

with general applicability cannot be summarised from a particular case (Gomm, 2000); the second view is that case studies emphasise the description of the event's process consequences from the general scene or the combination of all factors to answer the questions of "what's going on" and "why" (Yin, 2009), and it could be an in-depth and comprehensive study on a person, an event, a social group, or a community (Harrison *et al.*, 2017)

In this research, the term case study refers to the in-depth empirical investigation of a current phenomenon in its actual social context, especially when the boundary of that context is not obvious (Yin, 2009). This approach leads researchers to focus on important research questions, and the results are often interesting and theoretically innovative (Bartunek *et al.*, 2006; Graebner, Martin and Roundy, 2012). In recent years, multi-case studies based on theoretical sampling and replication logic are increasingly emerging (e.g., Voss et al., 2002). Single case studies can be regarded as part of multiple case studies, while multiple case studies can be seen as based on the comparative analysis of multiple single case studies.

Cheng (2001) argued that case studies are necessary for understanding the world and are particularly suited to dealing with complex problems. The most obvious advantages of case studies are its in-depth and comprehensive characteristics, its ability to some valuable propositions, explore research topics of theoretical significance, and provide enlightening ideas and valuable research directions for subsequent research (Feng, 2005).

The case study is the most suitable method for my research for the following reasons:

First, matching research methods with research objectives, which is advocated by Edmondson and McManus (2007). Case studies are particularly suited for exploratory theoretical research or for providing a new perspective research in a mature field, and TM is just such a field, especially in Chinese universities, and the reasons that TM in Chinese universities is an exploratory research are explained in Chapter 2.

Second, the analysis units and levels of case study are very diverse, and therefore are well suited to the diversity and complexity of universities. For example, Bingham and Eisenhardt (2017) analysed six high-tech start-up enterprises through case studies, and Davis and Eisenhardt (2011) analysed eight technical cooperations among ten organisations in the global

information and technology industry. The unit of analysis of a particular case study is determined by the theory to be constructed, and a case study can also have multiple analysis levels to form a nested research design. Martin and Eisenhardt (2010), for example, designed cross-functional units and enterprise levels as analysis units, and as a result, their research was particularly productive.

Third, case studies can be used to explain a theory, a concept, a phenomenon or for other purposes. Siggelkow (2001) constructed a new theoretical framework to analyse how the relationships between enterprises' activities affect their ability to cope with environmental changes. Davis and Eisenhardt (2011) put forward the core concept of Rotating Leadership. Tripsas and Gavetti (2000) illustrated the important role of management cognition through Polaroid's story. Langley (1999) called for more process research in the field of organisation and management research, and the case study method has great advantages in this respect.

Fourth, case studies can also be used to put forward theoretical propositions. Hydle (2015) conceptualised the role of time and space in strategizing through a case study. Based on a qualitative comparative case study analysis, Festing et al. (2015) characterised the peculiarities of TM and gender inclusion in talent development in the German context. In the case of GCC, it describes the challenges and limitations in talent attraction and retention (Singh, Jones and Hall, 2012). In addition, Ingram and Glod (2016) proposed a list of talent management practices suitable for Polish healthcare organisations.

4.4.1 Case Study Design

Case studies are well suited to exploring research questions involving "why" and "how" (Rowley, 2002). Case studies can be positivist or interpretivist, but only interpretivist case studies are considered here.

According to their research purpose, case studies can be divided into descriptive, explanatory, evaluative and exploratory studies (Bassey, 1999).

Descriptive case studies give an accurate overview of a person, event or situation, via story-telling; for example, Kimani and Waithaka (2013) undertook a descriptive case study of a Kenyan broadcasting corporation and explored the factors affecting talent management in the

public sector; Theys & Schultz (2020) conducted an in-depth investigation to describe talent management in the South African statutory water board sector.

The purpose of an explanatory case study is to summarise a phenomena or findings of a study and finally draw a conclusion. Explanatory case studies are suitable for examining issues of relevance or causality, and are commonly used for theory-testing; for example, Loomis (2018) conducted a single qualitative explanatory case study and explored succession planning practices in a federal agency; Smith (2000) assessed the leadership actions that influence and maintain the community blood supply in a specific region of the US by means of a qualitative explanatory case study.

An evaluative case study focuses on making judgments on specific cases. For example, Allen (2008) conducted an evaluative case study on the Management Assignment Program, a management accountability evaluation framework. Pullen (2006) assessed the pedagogical and instructional design effectiveness of online continuing professional education courses in his evaluative case study.

Exploratory case studies seek new insights or evaluate phenomena with new perspectives. For example, an exploratory study was conducted by Stewart and Harte (2010) at a very early stage of implementing TM to explore the connections between talent management and managing diversity. Festing et al. (2013) explored an under-researched area, namely talent management in German small and medium-sized enterprises, and they produced several key findings. Notably, in the field of talent management, exploratory case studies are particularly common (Jones *et al.*, 2012; Haines, 2016; Tran and Dou, 2019).

Yin (2004) organised case studies according to different criteria, and established four main types: single case study, holistic case study and embedded case study, multi-case study, holistic multi-case study and embedded multi-case study. Some scholars argue that the main difference between a single case study and a multi-case study lies in the difference in the number of cases used in the study, and that there is no essential difference (Yu, 2006). Yin (2009) also argues that there is no clear dividing line between the single case study and multi-case study. Multi-case studies are generally more reliable, accurate, better able to guide quantitative analysis, and more able to increase the diversity of understanding. However,

there are also significant difficulties in carrying out multi-case studies. Multi-case studies require information to be gathered from multiple entities to explore a phenomenon in its natural environment. Compared with the description of activities with a shared background in a single case study, a multi-case study requires the use of cross-case models, so that the activities in various situations can be observed at a deeper level. This approach provides a more comprehensive description and clearer explanation for the construction of theory, and tends to improve the applicability of relevant research conclusions in other situations. This study explores how universities can bring about changes through the implementation of talent management, so the multi-case study method is highly appropriate.

Therefore, **an interpretivist, multiple qualitative exploratory case study method was adopted for this study**. The main task of intra-case analysis is to answer research questions for each case, while comparative analysis aims to break through researchers' initial impressions, so as to obtain theories that strictly match the data, test whether the possible relationships are consistent with the evidence.

Regarding the research path, most scholars generally consider a case study to involve a set of clear and systematic procedures and technologies, which are used to analyse the large quantity of original data obtained from the field and conceptualise theoretically (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). In other words, a case study is a research tool that moves from concrete empirical facts to general theories. It uses a variety of data and data collection techniques, and through in-depth excavation and detailed description of the context and process of important events or behaviors occurring in specific social units, and analyses, interprets, judges, evaluates or predicts on this basis (Yin, 2009).

The value of interpretivist case studies lies in explaining a case under investigation and improving understanding of its essence or meaning. The conclusions of the case study adopt the method of analytical generalisation rather than statistical generalization (Andrade, 2009). The effectiveness of the case study depends primarily on the analysis of the data under the guidance of the theory. Some popular research methods and skills include theoretical sampling, semi-structured interviews, field observations, data structure and grounded theory, etc. This study adopted in-depth semi-structured interviews, while emphasising the use of non-interview data (such as documents, annual reports, seminars, archives) (Bailey and Barley,

2020).

Researchers who adopt the case study method adopt different procedures according to their purposes or needs (See Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Different case study procedures

Purpose	Theory Development	Policy evaluation	Positivism
Sources	Eisenhardt (1989)	Stake (1995)	Yin (2004)
Procedure	Define research question→Select case→Identify research tools→Collect data →Analyse→Propose hypothesis→Literature comparison→Result	Determine the type of case study→Determine research question→Collect data→Analyse and interpret→Determine the position of researchers→Validity→Report	Determine study design→Prepare for research→Collect data→Analyse→ Report

According to Hancock et al. (2021), the research steps are formulated and followed:

Step One: Research design. ① Explain a well-defined research problem. ② Make an initial inquiry into the existing literature, but suspend judgement of its conclusions to better discover new insights, and avoid theoretical presuppositions, because this may prejudice the research.

Step Two: Data collection. ① Give more opportunities to interviewees who have profound insights into research issues. ② Maintain flexibility and adjust the interview outline according to the respondents' answers. ③ Re-investigate the previous interviewees according to issues encountered in later interviews.

Step Three: Data analysis. ① Implement initial data coding. ② Make an overall summary table including first-order coding entries. ③ Organise the first-order coding into the second-order coding (focusing on theory). ④ Combine items, topics, and dimensions into a data structure.

Step Four: Theoretical expression. ① Form relationship between the concepts in the data

structure. ② Transform static data structure into theory model. ③ Dialogue with existing literature to refine the expression of emerging concepts and their relationships.

Constructing theory through case studies is an increasingly popular and significant research method, and a large number of influential studies have used this approach. However, researchers using the case study method also face many challenges (Eisenhardt &Graebner, 2007).

- Demonstrate the rationality of theoretical construction. Compared with large-scale hypothetical research, the process of conducting a case study is less objective. The research question needs to be closely related to existing studies, and the rationality of an inductive case study depends to a great extent on whether qualitative data can give insights into a series of complex social processes that quantitative data cannot easily reveal (Alam, 2020).

- Theoretical sampling of cases. Another common challenge in building theory through case studies is the selection of cases. While multiple case studies may produce better theories, the sampling required is more complex. Case selection is no longer based on the uniqueness of specific cases, but on the contribution of each case to theoretical development (Yin, 2004).

- Collection of data. Many knowledgeable and diverse research participants must be interviewed (Thomas, 2017).

- Present data. For multi-case studies, it is a challenge to fully describe each case (Crowe &Cresswell, 2011). The challenge of this double case study is to present the extensive research results within a limited space.

- Generate theory (Hammersley et al., 2000). To achieve this, it is necessary to grasp key information.

4.4.2 Selecting the Case

Unlike those working in a positivist framework, researches in interpretivism do not use large samples to 'test' theories (Tsang, 2014). Instead, the researcher should be deeply involved.

Qualitative research is, therefore, not just a toolbox, but is a researcher's means of understanding the world, and reflecting on the research purposes.

Small (2009) discussed the strategy of selecting respondents at random for small, in-depth interview projects or identifying `representative' cases. This study was inclined to typical cases, and in order to justify this approach, researchers must maintain the openness and novelty of research.

The criteria for selecting cases in this study are as follows: ① Based on the theory of case study sampling, select universities that can especially explain and demonstrate the implementation of talent management; ② To ensure the comprehensiveness and availability of data, the selected universities must have been established for a given period of time, have a relatively mature HRM system, and implement a TM strategy in order. Therefore, the universities selected for this study were P University, one of the best universities in Beijing, the political, economic and cultural center of China; and N University, a resource-poor university in underdeveloped western region. The selection of two contrasting universities more comprehensively covers TM in Chinese universities and enables a deeper understanding of this topic.

P Univerisity

Following the principle of typicality, this study takes a world-class university (P University) in China as a case study sample. The typicality of this sample is mainly reflected in the following aspects.

(1) At present, there are few universities in China that have adopted the Tenure-track system. Among these few universities, P University has established a mechanism of Tenure-track with Chinese characteristics since the year of 2014, in order to introduce and train first-class teachers and disrupt the original talent system. The tenure-track system is a university personnel management system based on contract employment. In this system, a pre-employment period is set for new college teachers, and the system design of "either promotion or leaving" is adopted. Teachers who pass the pre-employment period assessment can receive employment for life. Pre-employment can be regarded as a long probation period, which usually takes 3 years but can reach 6. If the employee passes

evaluation, they will be granted tenure. As long as there is no serious violation of laws and regulations, the employee can remain employed until the national statutory retirement age (60 or 65 for men and 55 or 60 for women), but if the employee fails evaluation, they will be dismissed or withdrawn from the long-term employment process.

(2) P University optimises specific measures in various aspects, such as talent introduction, promotion, evaluation and employment through a structured process, and aims to adherence to develop TM in a long-term.

(3) In terms of reform effectiveness, as of 2019, P University has implemented the system of long-term employment of teachers in all departments, realizing a smooth transition and completing the standardisation and normalisation of the long-term employment system. At present, the number of talents employed by the principal exceeds one-third of the total number of teachers in the whole school. Long-term teachers play a key role in personnel training, scientific research and social services in P University, and have produced institutional benefits. Generally speaking, the substantial achievements made by this university have inspired other universities in China, especially the "double first-class," universities to reform talent management.

N University

As one of the western universities in China, N University is one of the key universities supported by the government. Although its resources are poor, its contribution and role to the province and surrounding areas is critical. 60% of the students N University come from rural areas, 50% come from poor families, and 36% are ethnic minorities. Therefore, N University shoulders the heavy responsibility of preventing the intergenerational transmission of rural poverty, which is of great significance to the western region, especially in ethnic minority areas. This hidden contribution is not reflected in the ranking of universities, but is nonetheless unparalleled.

In terms of TM research, N University was selected as a typical case for the following reasons:

(1) Universities in western China account for half of the total number of universities in China. However, due to long-term uneven regional development, western universities have been

at a disadvantage; however, a revitalisation plan for western higher education has been vigorously implemented and has achieved remarkable results. For example, 10 billion yuan has been invested to support distinctive and high-level western universities, one of which is N. A series of measures have improved the basic conditions, teaching conditions and scientific experimental conditions of universities at different levels, and also played a highly significant role in the development of teaching staff.

N University belongs to both western universities and ethnic universities, which are in urgent need of talents. To meet this need, a talent attraction plan was implemented. On the one hand, it targets and rationally introduces talents; on the other hand, some posts and development opportunities are reserved for existing teaching and scientific research personnel in the university. However, the fierce competition of introducing talents, the practical problems of retaining talents, and the challenges of developing and applying talents in a utilitarian way within a structured framework are becoming increasingly severe.

(2) N University have vigorously implemented TM reform, including by hiring a new principal with a high salary in 2021, undertaking a series of talent reforms, establishing a multi-dimensional talent evaluation mechanism, making flexible use of talents, carrying out joint research, jointly producing results and realizing common development. As an elite talent, the principal was introduced flexibly and has played an active role in teacher training and leading talents.

4.4.3 Gaining Access to the Cases

I myself am the beneficiary of TM of N University, and I received support from N University to start my PhD study and undertake this research; receiving my research qualification from N University was, therefore, a logical step. P University has maintained a good and close relationship with N University for a long time. As the other party of one-to-one support, P University has signed a cooperation and construction agreement with N University, helping the university to develop.

On the one hand, P University has given N University holistic assistance in terms of human resources, financial and material resources, and has made significant efforts to assist in management services, education and teaching, talent training, team building and scientific

research, among other things. On the basis of good cooperation between the two universities, my research has also been supported by relevant personnel from P University. This comparative study of the two cases will also strengthen the future cooperation and development of the two universities.

Firstly, the researcher introduced and explained research intentions including the research purpose and orally to senior members of the HR department, after getting the initial positive response, the researcher immediately sent the Research Invitation Letter (Appendix One (A)) and asked permission formally. After receiving their support, the researcher interviewed HR staff, and received their feedback and recommendations. In addition, they provided a list of suitable personnel and contact information. Then, the researcher successfully sent an invitation letter (Appendix One (B)). Given the background, the researcher have a certain degree of understanding of the personal situation of some colleagues and peers, so the researcher purposefully selected the appropriate research objects to explain my research content. Following this, the researcher invited selected individuals to interviews. To develop the project further, the researcher adopted the purposive sampling and snowball sampling; more potential research objects were recommended by interviewees, gradually expanding the sample size.

Interviewees in this study were selected based on the following criteria: ① Individuals who are familiar with the university, and understand its organisational context; ② Individuals who are involved in designing, managing, or implementing talent management, or who are defined by the organisation and are included in the talent management program; ③ Individuals who have the will, interest and enough time to participate in this study.

In order to cover as many levels of employees as possible in each case, the researcher classified them. This classification is shown in Table 4.2. In general, 44 people were interviewed in this study, of which 15 were leadership and administer, accounting for about 34% of the total, and 29 were from the talent pool, accounting for about 66%. Among them, this study interviewed 20 people in P University and 24 people in N University, which is roughly equal.

Table 4.2 Classification of research objects and reasons for selection

Groups	Scope of this study	Reasons for Selection	Possible Position/Title	Expected Contribution	Sample Size		
					P University	U university	Total
Leadership	Individuals who are in a leadership position or make decisions with some managerial authority; individuals who have voice and power on academic or TM strategy.	A leader's values often have a highly significant impact on the policy direction of the entire organisation.	Principal/ Secretary of university Party Committee/ or their deputies	Provide insights into the organisational context, describe how they recognise TM and how they plan to implement it.	1	2	3
Administration	Individuals who participate in the design and implementation of TM; who engage in the specific work of TM practice; and individuals who provide talent services.	In addition to having a holistic view, they understand the details of TM operation	Dean/ School leaders	Provide a realistic and objective view of how TM was implemented and evaluate its value.	1	2	3
			Head of academic committee/ Department Head		2	1	3
			Office staff		1	1	2
			HR specialist		2	2	4
Academic talent pool	Regardless of whether they have the title of 'talent' or not, those who contribute to the university through their	As the main body of TM, their experience reflects the current situation of talents, and their	Elite/ Research Leader/ Professor	Provide personal experience to reveal the process and reasons behind their life and work,	4	4	8
			Introduced talents/ Key		3	5	8

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	professional knowledge and skills; and who have made achievements in scientific research or teaching.	characteristics, feelings and feedback determined the needs of TM.	members/ High performers	and provide subjective feedback regarding current TM.			
			Young talents		5	3	8
			Potential talents/ Talents that are being trained		1	3	4
Individuals to help	Exceptional cases uncovered during the investigation.	Make up for unforeseeable circumstances.	----	Provide exceptions and extremes.	0	1	1
					20	24	44

4.4.4 Research Context

In this section, the context of cases are shown in detail. the researcher refrained from using the original name of two universities and the revealing information about their identity is hidden to ensure confidentiality. Basic information is shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Basic Information of selected cases

Basic information	P University	N University
Founding Year	1907	1958
University Orientation	Comprehensive, research-oriented, internationalised universities with distinctive characteristics and great influence in China and overseas; National "985 Project" construction university; National "world first-class University" construction university (A Class);	Comprehensive, teaching-oriented, regional university with coordinated development of multiple disciplines; National "211 Project" construction university; National "First-class Discipline" construction university (C Class)
Location	Central City	Northwest Ethnic Region
Number of undergraduate students	18514	19296
The number of postgraduate and PhD students in the school	18584	6355
The number of international Students	2088	179
The number of minority student	78	997
The number of teaching staff members	2792, including 38 academicians	2690, including 1 academician
The number of specialties	82 Undergraduate Programs, 44 Academic Master Programs, 27 Professional Master Programs, 34 Ph.D. Programs, 9 Doctoral Programs, and 30 Post-doctoral Research Stations	80 Undergraduate Programs, 31 Academic Master Programs, 16 Professional Master Programs, 18 Ph.D. Programs, 8 Doctoral Programs, and 3 Post-doctoral Research Stations
Occupied Area	2.56 km^2	1.96 km^2
Developing Target	Walk with the motherland, assist global development in science and education, and build a world-class university with Chinese characteristics	Become a first-class university in western China with distinctive regional characteristics and outstanding ability to serve local areas

Through a process of collecting public information (including online news reports, related interview videos, official websites, statistical yearbooks, policy documents, etc.), the organisational context of the selected cases was analysed. Because the case study is in China, this study also refers to the evaluation indicators of the best employers in China, including ChinaHR.com, Zhaopin.com, Council of China Employer Brand Forum, and Universum. Most of the selected institutions combine the internal and external conditions of enterprises in their evaluation process, and their internal evaluation indicators are highly related to the dimensions of organisational support resources that this study hopes to present. Combining these studies, organisational support resources can be divided into five categories: corporate culture, working environment, employee life, welfare guarantee and training development (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Next, the context of P University and N University will be introduced in accordance with these five categories.

Table 4.4 Organisational support resources and characteristics of P University

	Organisational support resources	Evidence of characteristics
P University	Corporate Culture	● School Motto: Rigorous, realistic, united and innovative ● Walk with our motherland and help the world through science and technology
	Working Environment	● One of the most beautiful campuses ● Teachers have flexible working hours, and do not have to focus on bureaucratic processes
	Employee Life	● Regular anonymous questionnaire survey on teachers' working and living conditions to meet the needs of talents ● Add a special booth for talent affairs in the comprehensive service hall to serve high-level talents, establish a personnel service hotline and a suggestion supervision hotline, optimise business processes, and fully meet the reasonable needs of teachers in their study, life and work.
	Welfare Guarantee	● A talent fund of 50 million yuan is established for newly introduced talents, and new teachers are given high salaries through various financing methods.

		● For existing teachers: salary increases, the annual salary of professors is increased from 150,000 yuan to 200,000 yuan, and that of associate professors is increased from 100,000-120,000 yuan to 150,000-160,000 yuan. ● Plan X: This is divided into three categories: Class A subsidy of 200,000 yuan, accounting for 20%, Class B subsidy of 150,000 yuan and Class C subsidy of 100,000 yuan, accounting for about 40%
	Training Development	● Normalise online and offline training。 ● To set up various domestic and international training programs, cooperation projects, innovative talent support programs, award funds, etc., and establish postdoctoral workstations

Table 4.5 Organisational support resources and characteristics of N University

	Organisational support resources	Evidence of characteristics
N University	Corporate Culture	● School Motto: Esteeming virtue and Diligence, Seeking Truth and Innovation ● A spirit of 'Shazaoshu'
	Working Environment	● The campus covers a large area, but the per capita office space of teachers is relatively small. ● Teachers have flexible working hours, and do not have to focus on bureaucratic processes. ● Complex interpersonal relations.
	Employee Life	● The trade union organises some cultural and sports activities.
	Welfare Guarantee	● Through performance-based pay reform that touches the practical interests of more than 2,000 faculty members, the distribution mechanism of more work and more pay for outstanding achievements will be implemented.
	Training Development	● Online and offline training. ● Establish "Helan Mountain Forum". ● Send faculties to visit and study in high-level universities or scientific research institutions worldwide, and encourage them to improve their academic qualifications by providing financial

		support.

Table 4.6 Case Finding of the Implementation of Talent Management in P University

Characteristics of the organisation	● Talent volatility: frequent changes and fierce competition
	● Leadership values: advocating a free, humanistic spirit
	● Employee characteristics: strong internal drive, realised self-worth and self-assertion
Characteristics of organisational support resources	● To meet personalised needs, stimulate creativity and enthusiasm
	● Raise funds from outside to increase resource support
Implementation of TM	TM implemented by P University relies on the tenure-track system which has been implemented gradually. In 2007, it began to carry out classified management of teachers; in 2013, this process was essentially completed, with sufficient institutional preparations implemented for the implementation of the tenure-track system. In 2014, P University officially identified six departments for the first batch of pilot reform. In the early stage of the reform, the long-term teacher system in the United States was largely applied. In 2017, P University began to transplant the American Tenure-track system and consistently promoted the coupling of old and new systems. An increased compensation package was implemented through incremental reform leading to the completion of a tenure-track system with Chinese characteristics characterised by new methods for onboarding newcomers and dual-track operation
Case Finding	**Incentive is the core of TM at P University.** Unlike the American tenure system, which was established with the original intention of "maintaining occupational safety" and "academic freedom", the purpose of the tenure-track system proposed by P University is to establish a first-class teaching staff. For the purpose of achieving a first-class university, it

is necessary to solve the problems of "motivating people" and "selecting people", that is, to stimulate the enthusiasm of young teachers for academic work by granting long-term teaching posts, and to provide generous treatment and a stable environment to the talents who have passed the pre-employment assessment to maximise their academic value. It should be noted that the tenure system is intended to screen young scholars with academic interests and academic potential into tenure track.

P University uses scientific research output to orient TM. University teachers are not only assessed in terms of scientific research ability, but also teaching and social service. However, it can be seen from the evaluation index formulated by P University that the scientific research output of teachers has, to a significant extent, become the only rigid index. This reflects the fact that the universities represented by P University exist in a higher education in which the dual pressures of ranking competition and "double first-class" construction in Chinese universities strongly apply,. As a result, the scientific research output of young teachers is taken as the most important index of assessment, which reflects the locally grounded requirement young teachers to produce more scientific research results. Although the original intention of talent management is to build a first-class teaching staff, this goal has been sidelined in the process of popularizing the tenure-track system. The administrative department closely links the system with performance management, reduces the system to performance goals, regards the promotion of talents' scientific research performance as the main purpose of the system, and selectively ignores deeper values, such as "maintaining academic freedom", "cultivating organisational culture", "developing talents" and "promoting sense of belonging", etc. This approach, with an "up or out" deterrent, prioritises the shallow function of promoting performance output, and obscures the spiritual core of talent management. In a word, it shows a strong tendency to instrumental rationality, and plays a primarily stimulating

role, rather than protecting dedicated research and guaranteeing academic freedom.

Taking "administrationism" as the institutional logic of talent management. The logic of administrative doctrine is remarkably pervasive in China's universities. Universities took the programmatic documents issued as ideological guidance. The documents have primarily been executed by universities' personnel management department, which lack vertical communication and feedback, and ignores the opinions and voices of teachers at the grass-roots level. Teachers' subjective status cannot be reflected, and administrative departments have a greater right to speak, and administrationism has become an objective institutional logic. Even if P University has a good academic tradition in talent management, front-line teachers are only passive recipients of policy rules, and most teachers have no right to participate in the process of policymaking, let alone the right to make decisions. The solicitation of views before decision-making is only based on individual teachers, and is not mediated by formal, collective processes such as faculty meetings, which prevents teachers from forming a community of interests to protect their rights and interests. On the one hand, this reflects the tradition of top-down reform of the personnel system in universities in China; on the other hand, it reflects the tough logic of the administrative department of universities as an administrative control tool. In addition, P University aggressively implements its "up or out" process, which reduces the university to an evaluative role. Correlatively, the university does not offer guidance on career development and academic career planning for participating talents, which reduces the system to a tool for accelerating scientific research performance.

Table 4.7 Case Finding of the Implementation of Talent Management in N University

Characteristics of the organisation	Talent volatility: relatively stable
	Leadership values: Respect the spirit of dedication
	Employee characteristics: Focus on pleasant work, fairness and respect
Characteristics of organisational support resources	Focus on collective interests, provide universal welfare, wide coverage; stimulate the sense of service, honor and enthusiasm for work Re-distribution of existing resources
Implementation of TM	Talent introduction is the most important part of TM in N University, which suffers from acute brain drain and a fundamental lack of talent. On the one hand, relying on the "Helan Mountain Scholars" plan, enabled channels of talent recruitment, such as full-time recruitment, agreed salary, special appointment plan of Scholars, pre-recruitment etc to be broadened. N University attracted a group of talents from the external talent market, and gathered a group of high-end talents through flexible recruitment and introduction. On the other hand, N University is prepared to train a group of academic leaders in school, and focus on training research talents in various disciplines, and increase its efforts to send young teachers to visit and study in high-level universities or scientific research institutions worldwide. In addition, N University has implemented Classification management in its faculties, and carried out performance-based

	pay reform in 2017. Drawing lessons from the mature practices of top universities, in the year of 2020, professional and technical personnel were assigned posts involving 2,167 people in across the university, which is an important breakthrough in stimulating motivation and vitality. The purpose is to solve the five-year talent shortage, and effectively realise the dynamic management of talents' rank and position.
Case Finding	If P University is a pioneer of scientific research and innovation leading reform, then N University is the representative of traditional universities with teaching as the mainstay. As a **typical resource-dependent university**, in order not to lose the competition of resources and interests introduced by a new round of key university construction policies and increase its value in academic hierarchy system, N University embarked on a rapid path of talent team construction. Talent recruitment is essentially a commodity-style talent game, a mutual pinch talent competition and a price war talent competition. **A performance point system (called Gongfen) has been implemented.** Like most universities, N University initially only had traditional personnel management, and then began to gain awareness of TM, which was receiving unprecedented attention. However, due to the long-term institutional constraints of external educational management policies and the characteristics of its internal academic development, N University has fallen into chaos. For example, the relationship between new recruits and local talents is tense, and the differentiated treatment incoming talents weakens the enthusiasm of existing talents. Conflicts between teachers still within the regular budget and the introduced talents (with agreed tenure) are evident in many aspects. Under the constraint of limited resources of the university, it is impossible to meet the reasonable expectations of all groups of talents at various stages.

	N University implemented a hierarchical annual salary system, and a post allowance and performance compensation system were adopted to ensure quotas were met in terms of academic ability, achievements and contributions of talents. **N University proposed to realise school autonomy**, expecting that each school would cultivate of its own talent, in order to produce stronger talent effect. However, insufficient power and funds has been delegated to schools, especially in the transformation of talents from regular budgeted "teachers" to contracted "employers".

4.5 Data Collection Methods

4.5.1 In-Depth Interviews

An in-depth interview is a verbal event constructed by interviewers and interviewees, a unique way to know and understand the subjective world of social subjects. Through the process and content of the interview, the researcher explores and analyses the interviewee's behavioral motivation, beliefs, attitudes and views (Minichiello, Aroni and Hays, 2008). Therefore, the most important purpose of an in-depth interview is to explore relevant facts in detail, and thereby explore the meaning of the words and context given by the interviewees (Arksey and Knight, 1999). An in-depth interview is not a process in which one party "objectively" understands the situation based on the discourse of the other party, but a process in which both parties interact and construct "facts" and "behaviors" together. During the interview, the two sides inquire, play games, and coordinate with each other. Both sides' personal identities and how they relate mutually will affect the style and process of the interview (Morris, 2015). Therefore, this inquiry can be realised with a positive attitude and position, and an in-depth interview is not only a process of collecting data, but also a process of research (Schutz, 1976). It is typically conducted individually to provide a more involving experience.

In this study, it conducted in-depth 44 interviews across P and N University. It includes leadership, administrator and talent pool, and the specific number and distribution have been explained in Table 4.2. In-depth interviews were used in this study, because it distinct from general interviews in three ways: ① The deepening of content. An in-depth interview does not simply involve repeated face-to-face contact between the researcher and the interviewee, but is characterised by relaxed and even barrier-free communication (Hancock, Algozzine and Lim, 2021). Interviewers can obtain a large number of responses related to research problems and information regarding what interviewees think, say and do in the given context (Minichiello, Aroni and Hays, 2008). ② The deepening of relationship. In the process of in-depth communication, the researcher should strongly respect and valourise the interviewee's statement and viewpoint, and transcend personal feelings, understanding and explanation (Chirban, 1996). The interview, as a whole, is the shared product of researchers and research objects. The relationship should be equal. The researcher should not manipulate, but guide, the interview process(Hancock, Algozzine and Lim, 2021). ③ The deepening of data

processing. Faced with rich interview results, the researcher should be adept at exploring the profound significance hidden in superficial statements (Boyce and Neale, 2006). The focus of an in-depth interview is not only to achieve the research objectives, but to explore multiple views on activities, events and phenomena, as reflected in interviewees' statements (Ritchie *et al.*, 2013).

In addition, semi-structured interview approach was used in this study, and different interview questions were developed for different groups (see Appendix Four), and see Appendix Three for the framework and process of this study for designing the interview outline. the interview questions prepared by the interviewer must be open-ended (Roberts, 2020). In the interview, responses are unpredictable, so the interview must develop in a cautious and theoretically grounded way (Roulston, deMarrais and Lewis, 2003).

In order to ensure the 'big-tent' criteria for perfect qualitative research (Tracy, 2010), methods of observation and public data collection were used in this study in addition to in-depth semi-structured interview. The function of each component is as follows: ① In-depth semi-structured interview. Try to cover talents at different levels in the case universities and individuals with different roles involved in talent management activities, and adopt the purposive sampling and snowball method to expand the sample size. The content of formal interview includes talent conceptualisations and TM Practices and other key questions (See Appendix Three: Questions for Leadership, Administration and Talent Pool). The interview time, of both face-to-face and Skype interviews, is around 60min. ②Pilot interviews: Before the actual research interviews, pilot interviews were conducted in my faculty groups, and the researcher checked the logic of the questions in the interview, validated the quality of them, and recognized the deficiencies of the interview, that is, different interview questions should be developed for different interview groups in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the interview. ③ Public information collection, that is, collecting relevant information regarding chosen cases through public channels, such as online news reports, related interview videos, policy documents and official website statistical yearbooks, etc.

The formulation of interview questions underwent a meticulous process guided by fundamental principles aimed at ensuring the pertinence, depth, and appropriateness of the inquiries. Initially, a thorough examination of extant literature relevant to the research topic

was undertaken. This step aided in identifying key themes and gaps in the existing knowledge, with the questions employed in related studies serving as crucial references for the present investigation. Subsequently, each question was meticulously crafted to address specific facets vital for the attainment of the study's objectives, thereby ensuring a focused and purposeful approach, as demonstrated in Appendix Four. Thirdly, insights and feedback were sought from mentors and pertinent experts, leveraging their invaluable experiences and unique perspectives within the research domain. As a fourth step, a pilot study was executed with a limited sample size to assess the lucidity, comprehensibility, and efficacy of the interview questions. Lastly, this study consistently considered ethical considerations, incorporating participant comfort and confidentiality into the question formulation process.

4.5.2 Sampling

Sampling decisions characterised every stage of the study (Gentles, et al., 2015), such as selecting cases, selecting groups and individuals to interview, deciding which data should be transcribed and analysed (data sampling), which interview data should be analysed in detail (internal data sampling), which are carefully coded, and which are "quoted" as representative texts, etc.

Sampling methods are typically divided into two categories: probability or random sampling, and non-probability or non-random sampling. In probability sampling, every unit in the population has an equal opportunity to be selected (Omona, 2013). In contrast, non-probabilistic sampling means that researchers judge whether an individual is sampled (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2018). The various types of probability sampling techniques include: simple random, stratified random, cluster sampling, systematic sampling, and multi-stage sampling, while the non-probability sampling techniques include: quota sampling, snowball sampling, judgement (or purposive) sampling, and convenience sampling (Omona, 2013; Sarstedt *et al.*, 2018).

In this study, the researcher intentionally chose specific individuals for interviews and then implemented snowball sampling. Thus, the researcher utilized both purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is deliberately selected in research endeavors due to its capacity to target individuals or groups possessing pertinent characteristics or experiences germane to the research inquiry (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). This research could employy

purposive sampling when seeking comprehensive insights from participants capable of furnishing substantial and meaningful information about the phenomena under scrutiny. This sampling methodology facilitates a strategic selection of participants based on their distinctive qualities or pertinence to the study, thereby augmenting the study's efficacy in addressing specific research inquiries or objectives with depth and precision (Robinson, 2014).

Through the snowball method, the researcher is able to access to wider sample to obtain more significant results and establish more engaged communication through the recommendation of their colleagues and acquaintances. This method works better with small groups, which are difficult to access (Brewerton and Millward, 2001). HR staff provided me with a list of suitable candidates and contact information based on my positioning and selection criteria, and interviewees recommended more candidates for consideration. Since data collection, data analysis and sampling are intertwined in qualitative studies, this study follows the logic of discovery from design, to data collection, to sampling and the choice of analysis strategy (Tellis, 1997). The intention is not to study the whole at the level of experience, but to construct a theory regarding the phenomenon of TM in the two case universities at the level of theory. Therefore, this study aims to select the individual, group or environment that can provide the maximum amount of information or the most valuable information as the research object according to the research purpose.

Additionally, instead of determining the interviewees in advance, the researcher dynamically judges whether the list of interviewees is saturated and determine any remaining gaps according to the individuals interviewed, so as to allow the theory to emerge early in the process.

Quantitative researchers use samples to represent a population, enabling conclusions obtained from sample research to be extended to a population (Bloomfield & Fisher, 2019). In contrast, the sampling goal of qualitative research is to provide exhaustive information regarding the factors related to a certain phenomenon and the relationship between the factors, so as to achieve data saturation (Fusch and Ness, 2015).

The purpose of sampling is to allow the researcher to reveal more new unknown information, rather than to hear the same information repeated multiple times (Hennink and Kaiser, 2022).

The optimal sampling scheme is the most varied case combination; in other words, the more different the combinations of respondents are, the wider the scope will be and the easier it will be to achieve information saturation (Sarstedt *et al.*, 2018). The criterion of theoretical saturation, that is, the criterion of stopping the sampling and interview process is when additional data cannot provide new category, properties and dimensions (or new concepts) (Braun and Clarke, 2021). It is necessary to constantly define the sampling standard and update the sampling quantity at each stage of the study. Therefore, the existing sampling size of 30 is only an estimation based on the size of other studies. For example, Sohrabi et al. (2017) adopted snowball sampling in their case study and interviewed 12 university and corporate experts to design an agile model for talent management. Hojjati et al. (2018) provided a TM model for staff of Shahed University by interviewing 30 specialists using targeted snowball sampling. Sehhat et al. (2020) researched knowledge-based agricultural companies to identify dimensions in the field of talent management. To achieve this, they used an in-depth semi-structured interview with 30 experts to establish theoretical foundations and a research background. In another study, Fukey et al. (2019) explored the various types of selection process to achieve the right type of candidate for the organisation. To achieve this, they used the sampling method with a sample size of 30. In light of the saturation of information as a standard and the sample size of previous studies, it would be appropriate to conclude this study after 44 interviews.

4.5.3 Interviews Protocol

The following procedures were adopted in this study:

(1) Interview preparation

- Identify the interviewees, and send them the interview invitation letter for confirmation, see Appendix One (B).

- Fully explain the purpose of the study, and their role in the study and inform them of their right to withdraw at any time.

- Determine the appropriate time and place of the interview. Due to Covid safety procedures, face-to-face meetings are not mandatory, and Skype, WeChat or Tencent Meeting can be used.

- Ensure that this research continuously complies with ethical research standards, including being reviewed by the Ethical Research Committee.

- Prepare Interview Outline. Different questions for different groups were explored (Appendix Four), so different question sheet was prepared and used.

(2) Before the formal interview begins

- Ensure that the purpose of the interview is explained to the stakeholders, clarify why they were chosen to be interviewed, and provide the expected length of the interview

- Informed consent and confidentiality agreements, see Appendix two (B). Reintroduce the purpose of the interview, reaffirm why they were selected, the expected duration of the interview, confidentiality concerns, and the purpose of the notes and recorder.

- With permission, turn on the recording device.

(3) Interview in progress

- The interview attempted to elicit real and in-depth information from the interviewee with an objective and respectful attitude. The researcher did these interviews in mother language, so that participants can fully express themselves without language limitation.

- This research adopted the method of progressive focusing, which was proposed by Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012), to conduct in-depth interviews. Interviews always started with the personal experience, interests, daily life or behavior, and then extends to the target field, namely TM in University.

(4) After interviews

- Analyse the interview materials, check the clarity of the recording, and summarise the key information.

- Data analysis.

4.5.4 Analytical Strategy

Samples provide data sources for theories, and data analysis interfaces between emerging theories and data. During this process, theories need to be constantly reassessed to ensure they reflect the data. Therefore, instead of waiting for all the data to be collected prior to analysis, each paragraph of data will be analysed as soon as possible, to assess the emerging theory (Francis *et al.*, 2010). The earlier the emerging theory appears, the earlier it can reach the point of information. In addition, early discovery of data gaps or theoretical gaps can guide the collection of data, and thereby improve the research by clarifying vague and incomplete data in a timely fashion (Fusch, 2015).

Interview data can be analysed in many ways, but quantitatively and qualitatively. (Bernard &Ryan, 2010). The methods are not mutually exclusive or independent, but need to be used flexibly to maximise the value of the research. (See Table 4.8)

Table 4.8 Analytical methods for interview data

Analytical method	Qualitative data	Quantitative data
Qualitative method	Content Analysis (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008), Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006), Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012)	Explore and state the meaning of quantified results (Bogdan and Ksander, 1980)
Quantitative method	Convert text to numbers, content analysis, word count, freelist, pilesort, etc. (Dixon-Woods *et al.*, 2005)	Statistical and mathematical calculations on numerical data (Osborne, 2008)

Content analysis is a flexible method, which discovers and analyses problems based on various texts (such as transcript of interviews, government and enterprise documents, newspapers and meeting records etc.). In doing so, it transforms the text and image content from their piecemeal, qualitative form to systematic form (White and Marsh, 2006). Thematic analysis pays more attention to the meaning and themes within the text, aiming to uncover the underlying themes and meanings through in-depth exploration of the text, and to reveal the connotations and thematic structure therein (Braun and Clarke, 2012).

For this study, the method of thematic analysis was adopted for the following reasons: (1) It emphasises the inductive analysis of data (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2011); (2) It allows data collection and data analysis to be carried out simultaneously (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013); (3) It emphasises the integration of empirical data and abstract concepts (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2016); and (4) It is suitable for analysing data for the purpose of theoretical construction (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2016).

Below is a depiction of the process of thematic analysis of this study, as cited by Maguire and Delahunt (2017).
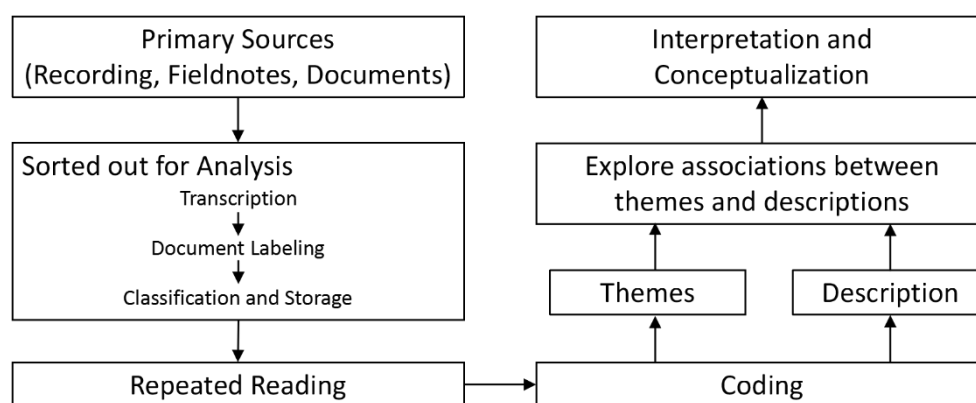
Figure 4.1 Procedures of Thematic Analysis

4.5.5 Analytical Journey

Step 1: Categorise for Analysis

File the notes, transcribe recorded data into words, classify and build special documents for preservation, input the original data into personal computer, and index the data according to type, provider and collection time, and finally attach a serial number to each data set. The principles governing this process are convenient storage, easy access and privacy protection.

Considering the possible ambiguity and inaccuracy of culture and language in the process of translation, the researcher collected and analysed the authentic data, that is, the Chinese transcription, and then translated the analysed results.

Step2: Repeated Reading

This step requires careful reading and interpretation of the initial text, and can also refer to raw audio data, because the effectiveness of the initial textual interpretation will determine

the effectiveness of analysis. Without reading, effective analysis cannot be carried out (Dey, 1993). The process of reading to confirm understanding is cyclic and even after reconfirming the theme, the complex relationships between subjects should be explored. In this process, any thoughts, ideas, assumptions or assumptions in the analysis are recorded by writing memos, in the form of concise notes and reflective comments. In addition, it is necessary to establish categories inductively. My principles of classification is to reflect the research question.

Step 3: Coding

Create themes and concepts and use them to analyse data, with an emphasis on capturing localised concepts. The process is shown in the following Figure.
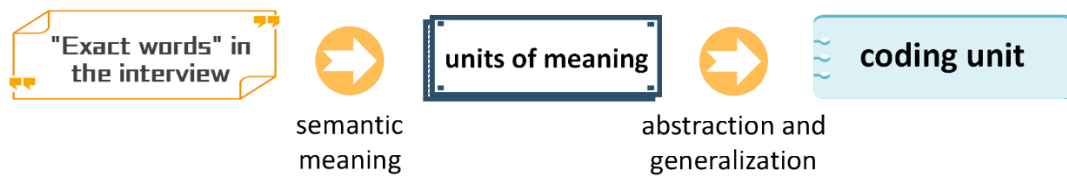
Figure 4.2 Process of Coding

The inductive process of creating a node is: ①Decide the purpose of distinguishing based on the research question; ②Decide abstract criteria based on interview results; ③Reading and categorizing; ④Check and re-create new categories if necessary and analyse a next round; ⑤Establish a category system.

The analysis is carried out manually, which is efficient and can avoid the disadvantages of software coding, such as the lack of contextualisation of code, and the influence of researchers' thinking and imagination in the analysis process (Zamawe, 2015).

Table 4.9 Coding examples of this study

Node	Sub-nodes
Talent Definition	● Paper and research programme
	● Ph.D.
	● Knowledge and skills
	● Contribution

	• Virtue
	• Well-behaved
TM Definition	• Performance management
	• HRM
	• Knowledge management
	• Policies
	• Remain the elite
	• Talent cultivation
P University	• Classified management of teachers
	• Up or out
	• Six-year assessment
	• Professional promotion system
	• new and old system
	• Tenure-track
	• Well-paid
	• Incremental reform
	• School as an entity
	• Stress and involution ('Neijuan')
	• First-class teachers
	• Academic right
	• International standard
	• Group interest
N University	• Gongfen system
	• Performance Assessment
	• New headmaster
	• Double First-class university construction
	• Professional promotion
	• Funds and papers
	• Guanxi
	• Treatment
	• Talent attraction

	• Do a PhD
	• Teaching useless
	• Reform
	• School autonomy
	• Lying flat ('Tangping')
Talent Attraction	• Platform and resource
	• Development opportunity
	• Region
	• Working environment
	• Work autonomy
	• Economy
	• Professional fit
	• Interpersonal connections
	• Family factors
	• Stable
	• Have holidays
	• Free time, and highly disposable
	• Reputation and respectable
	• Team

(Data source: Author generated.)

4.5.6 Validity and Reliability Check

In reference to the evaluation criteria of research methods, Yin argues that a case study can be evaluated in terms of construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability (Yin, 2009). With this in mind, the research ensured ① typicality and inspiration of the cases, ② credibility and willfulness, popularisation, and accuracy of records, ③ logical reliability, theoretical saturation, freshness and importance of results.

Regarding the limitations of methodology, there are some common criticisms of case studies (Yin, 2004; Giezen, 2012): researcher bias, the difficulty of summarizing general conclusions, length of time required, descriptive presentation, boundary confusion in case selection, and measure of representative, etc. However, the case study is based on analytical induction, not

statistical induction, so it should not be evaluated in terms of statistical validity and reliability.

Case studies must follow two principles: first, the logic used in the case is self-consistent; second, the results of the case are to some extent generalisable. In the process of this study, ①the researcher judged whether the collected data reflected the objective situation of the respondents based on experience and common sense. ② the researcher judged whether the study met the requirements of the original design, and whether the description is accurate, and if necessary, I verified and confirmed the information provided by the interviewees through the later investigation. ③ the researcher judged whether the data is valuable for analysis and interpretation.

This study used two methods to increase reliability, namely:

(1) Increase the reliability of documentation analysis.

Policy documents on talent management were collected in this study, mainly from the official website of the school and the official website of the department of education and the local education bureau. Due to the requirement of the independent completion of the paper, inter-rater reliability cannot be implemented through team discussion and resolution of all problematic and conflicting codes. Therefore, the researcher took training in analysing codes and procedures to improve reliability.

(2) Increase the reliability of interview analysis.

Check the interview outline and conduct a pilot study test, and fully explain the research intention to the interviewees to ensure the interviewees understand the meaning of the questions consistently, and ensure that the interviewees' responses avoid uncertainty in coding.

4.6 Ethical considerations

(1) Informed participation

Before each interview, the researcher introduced the research content and purpose to respondents in detail and obtained written consent to ensure voluntary participation. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher informed them of their right to terminate the

interview at any time, as well as their right to refuse to answer any questions.

(2) Disclosure of information.

The researcher carefully handled participants' personal and confidential data, prevented data leakage, and reassured the participants regarding privacy, data theft, data leaks, and data loss. The researcher separated interview transcriptions from the names of respondents to protect their identities and the researcher established a numbering system to protect their privacy. In addition, the list of interviewees is stored in a secure place and used only in this study. For some identity-sensitive information provided by interviewees, protective measures were taken to ensure no information was disclosed. After the study, the list will be destroyed to implement the principle of anonymity and confidentiality.

(3) Participant well-being

The participants involved in this research are expected to define talents, and provide personal experience, describe their background in terms of teaching achievements, instructing students, conducting research, serving the local community, etc. The topics of talents, salary, welfare, rewards, personal development, satisfactory working conditions and working pressures are highly sensitive, and there is a risk of discomfort.

Possible ways to reduce discomfort and harm: Show great respect and welcome respondents sincerely; Conduct interviews in a comfortable and private area; Create a good atmosphere when interviewing; Make an emotional connection; Encourage participants properly; Avoid awkward pauses; Subtlely control topics; Avoid overreaching and invading the privacy of participants; Never coerce participants into providing information or participating.

Consent must be given by all participants for recording. Failure to do this would lead to participants concealing facts, feeling embarrassed or annoyed, or terminating the interview. Nonetheless, the recording process can make interviewees uncomfortable.

Ethical Conduct:

● Inform participants in advance.

● Ensure consent is always received, even though it may seem insignificant.

4.7 Conclusion

As it described in this chapter, conducting this research necessitated many decisions.

Ontology is the nature of 'being' or reality (Denzin & Lincoln,2008). In this particular case, it refers to the belief, implicit in this research, that reality is not the only external truth of the objective world/ What is understood as contemporary reality is situational and subjective. Epistemology deals with how people perceive the truth (Montero, 2002). Practice-based intersubjectivity is the fundamental epistemological proposition of this study. The world is created based on knowledge and meanings, thereby resulting in the construction of social reality. By analysing data and forming theories, induction is used to form hypotheses, and interpretative understanding is gained by interacting with research objects.

According to the research questions, this research adopted a multiple qualitative exploratory case study method within the paradigm of interpretivism. Considering context, meaning, interpretation, and subjectivity, this chapter justified the selection of this method. In the research design, this chapter explained my selection of P University and N University as case universities. As a result of using the same analytical strategy throughout the study, this research was able to ensure consistency in the handling of the data sets. Additionally, this study described the process of gaining access to the cases and the research context of each case. The method of in-depth semi-structured interview and thematic analysis was used in the process of data collection and data analysis. Through coding, a number of concepts were explored with a view to generating research findings. Further details of the research findings will be presented in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 5 Empirical Findings

5.1 Introduction

Based on research and interviews, this chapter illustrates the different perspectives and realities of TM at the two case universities and discusses the research questions in further detail. The chapter is organised around the four research questions. In section 5.2, this study defines TM by presenting empirical data from interviews conducted across two case universities and elaborate two questions, namely: 'what does talent mean for Chinese universities?', and 'what extent is TM understood in Chinese universities?' this study discusses TM in Chinese universities, at the level of policy and practice, from the perspective of the organisation and the individual.

In section 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5, it introduces and analyses the two cases to answer the following research questions: How does TM fit with strategy and organisational culture? What are the contributions of TM in Chinese universities? What are the main issues/challenges of implementing TM in the Chinese universities selected for this study? To answer these questions, this study uses empirical evidence and demonstrate the specific approach and implementation process of TM. Additionally, the following research sub-questions were addressed: How far has TM progressed in Chinese universities? What are the main recruitment, attraction and retention challenges in Chinese universities? What are the links between TM and other areas of management, such as performance management and rewards)

The conclusion of the study is outlined in section 5.6. It should be noted that the two case universities attach great importance to talent attraction and reputation. In order to avoid risking any negative impact resulting from this research, especially relating to talent pressure, the abbreviations 'P University' and 'U university' are used instead of the universities' names.

5.2 Research Question One: Definitions of TM

This section answers the first research question of the thesis (What does the concept of TM mean in Chinese university?) from both an organisational and individual perspective.

5.2.1 What does 'talent' mean for Chinese universities?

To better understand the role TM plays in Chinese universities, it is first necessary to clarify how TM is defined by the organisation and recognised by those within the organisation.

In the literature review, the definition of talent is examined from various perspectives. Through field research in N University and P University and in-depth interviews with relevant people, the definition of 'talent' in universities has been clarified.

P University divides talents into six levels in their talent recruitment (see Table 5.1), and uses it as a standard to identify talents and respond accordingly. At the same time, talents set their own goals, evaluate and demonstrate their abilities based on these goals, to obtain a teaching position. This division and identification is not only applicable to P University, but also is used in many universities in China, and it has become one of the most popular and widely recognised methods of university talent identification.

Table 5.1 Talent division at P University

Talent Titles	Description	General Requirements	Identified Conditions	Treatment
Outstanding Talent	Well-known individuals with academic influence in relevant fields who have the ability to lead academic teams, or the chief expert in National Talent Programme;	(1) Political correctness, exemplary morals, meticulous scholarship, good physical and mental health, strong ability to work in teams and collaboratively, skills in cross-cultural communication; (2) PhD degree; (3) Age limitation.	(1) Scientific Outcomes (Papers and Funding); (2) Research Awards; (3) Talent Programme;	Housing subsidies + Research start-up fund
Distinguished Talent	Famous experts and scholars in the field whoare expected to join the National Talent Programme;			
Rising Talent	Young and middle-aged academic leaders and core teachers with strong academic backgrounds, strong scientific research records and a clear ability to innovate;		(1) Scientific Outcomes; (2) Research Awards;	
Potential Talent	Young scholars with strong academic backgrounds, who have achieved certain academic achievements and have strong development potential;			
Talent	PhDs with strong academic backgrounds, who fit universities' professional development criteria;			
Supplementary Faculty	General teaching and scientific research personnel with good		Scientific Outcomes;	

	academic backgrounds; are required as supplements according to the organisation of the teaching team;			

(Data sources: Sorted out from 2021 talent recruitment and introduction plan of P University, and provided by its HR department.)

Regarding the general requirements of talents at P University, the first consideration of talents in universities is 'political correctness', which is a concrete manifestation of the will of the country. The government held a talent work conference in 2021, which stated that talents must adhere to approved political norms, and encouraged talents to be deeply patriotic. However, this raises the question of how 'political correctness' should be defined. The vice president of P University explained it in the following way:

> *"That is to say, we must follow the principle of Country First, adhere to justice and pursue truth and focus, contribute and take on more responsibility. We hope that our talents can respond to the needs of the country. This is also the development direction and core value of our school; to solve the key scientific issues that hinder human development." (Uni.P-LE-DE-03)*

The priority given to political correctness reflects the unique political context of China. This is further evidenced by the 'Serve the nation' strategy which has become the primary basis for managing a university, and appears in nearly all government documents on higher education policy published in China since 2018 (Chen, 2022). Building on the explanation given in Chapter 2, the government clearly expresses its demand for universities through a series of guidelines and policies, such as the 'double first-class' construction, which has become the basis for renewing and developing the university. Although the term 'political correctness' itself is potentially in conflict with academic freedom (Stark, 1997), it is nonetheless generally seen as an expression of the social responsibility of every Chinese university; as a university is part of society and has an obligation to the institution that finances it (Chen, 2022). Wang & Xue (2018) argue that, in the social field, Chinese universities have undergone substantial changes. More specifically, they have developed within the framework of 'at fringe – gradually adaptation – leading innovation' or 'at fringe – seek collaboration – serve society proactively', and have become increasingly closely integrated with social society. According to Zhou & Wang (2020), universities should provide patriotic education to all groups. Chinese

universities have, therefore, put 'Serve national strategy' at the heart of their own development strategy, which involves aspects such as talent training, scientific research, and social service. In addition to talent strategy, 'political correctness' has been emphasised as a basic requirement for talent identification. However, this is not clear at the level of definition.

Furthermore, the requirement of 'exemplary morals' reflects the high moral standards that are deeply ingrained in Chinese culture. Throughout history, Chinese teachers have viewed morality as the highest value based on ancient traditional teachings. Moreover, it was highlighted frequently in the research interviews, which suggests that the cultural concept of 'virtue first' has taken root. The deputy secretary of CPC of N university said that:

"……With both excellent morals and academic skills, and a high degree of professionalism. In my view, merit is more important and it comes first." (Uni.N-LE-SE-16)

The concept of exemplary morals perfectly reflects the cultural characteristics of the concept of talent in the Chinese context. The Chinese word 'Shi De' can be translated as teaching ethics. As a culturally grounded spiritual expression which transcends utilitarianism, this concept is strongly associated with model moral character, has always been esteemed and practised by law-abiding individuals, though its meaning has never been specified (Wang et al., 2022). Prior to 2011, the Ministry of Education issued 'the code of professional ethics' for universities, which prescribed the following values: patriotism, abiding by the law, dedication, loving students, attaining a high level of education, conducting rigorous research, serving the community, and serving as a role model. Teachers are subject to these expectations at universities. However, it is difficult to quantify these values since they have typically been understood intuitively (Zhu, 1994). In other words, these values constitute a kind of moral inheritance that enriches and develops individual emotions, fosters emotional connections between individuals and groups, and contributes to the formation of a healthy, harmonious, stable and happy atmosphere (Wang & Zhu, 1994; Ding & Ge, 2018). Wang & Zhu (2015) argue that attention to moral sense reflects the mutual coordination and common growth between individuals' emotional quality and their external environment, and is an important standard for examining the healthy development of the educational environment and society as a whole. From the perspective of university TM, such culturally transmitted moral inspires self-restraint in the growth of talents. This, may influence the definition of talent, but it is rarely

explicitly mentioned in the literature. Therefore, university talents need to strive to maintain the highest standards in personal morality and academic ethics, and this reflects the Chinese cultural context, historical inheritance, social consensus, university expectations as well as personal ambition.

Based on this, it is important to consider the types of people who become university talents. Views vary on this issue, as the two quotes given below demonstrate, one is from a leader of academic research committee of P university and the other one is from an administration staff in N university:

> *"Of course, they must first have a strong professional ability and professional standpoint. In addition, they might have an international vision, good personal character and full of energy, and also the humanistic approach to education which a teacher should have. And……The international vision I mentioned is not about language or having international study background, but rather about having a positive, opened-eyed attitude to the world and dialogue with students; and what is more important is a strong, born with sense of responsibility and fully taking care of their students." (Uni.P-TP-RL-08)*

> *"People have to have great specialised skills, and some more common skills... for example, the ability to innovate, analytical skills, the ability to learn inductively, to communicate effectively, and a willingness to engage in lifelong learning, and so on." (Uni.N-AD-HR-15)*

These viewpoints share a basic understanding, namely that there is a prerequisite for the recognition of talents: they must first have certain knowledge and skills, rich knowledge of natural or social science, knowledge in a certain professional field, or even some outstanding personal ability, etc.

Another clear consensus emerges from the quotes, namely that talents must demonstrate a real ability to positively contribute - to promoting the development of universities, which could manifest itself in a variety of ways. A professor at N University's talent pool believed:

> *"Opportunities in the real world may not be equal. Although some people are talented, their talents may not be relevant to current research fields, so the value of such people cannot be realised. Only when value is brought into play and practical contributions are*

made can an individual receive corresponding talent treatment." (Uni.N-TP-KM-17)

An administrative staff believed that:

"No matter what your job position is, not only those working in teaching and scientific research positions are talents, but also there are many excellent talents in administrative positions or service positions, who generate good ideas, have recognised their passion, have a talent for management, good leadership, a good ability to administrate. Such individuals, with the proper skill set, are also talents and they have consistently made many practical contributions to the development of the university." (Uni.N-AD-OS-02)

An HR professional outlined the official view:

"In general, talents in universities need not only strong professional knowledge, but also a wide range of basic knowledge, strong teaching and research ability, certain insights, the ability to think academically, and the ability to express themselves effectively. Additionally, teachers also need to be physically healthy, and have a good moral code and appropriate values. Teachers should set an example and be able to correctly deal with the many challenges of teaching and scientific research." (Uni.P-AD-HR-01)

Individuals from HR also contributed some interesting supplementary observations regarding their own work, for example: "*Talents are high performers*", have a "*big heart*", "*cross-industry experience*", and are "*the pioneers and leaders*", who "*constantly adapt to new requirements and innovate, and always in new fields,*" etc.

Therefore, beyond knowledge and skills, talents are also determined according to practical elements, that is, creative work, such as examples of innovation beyond the work of their predecessors, or new applications of previous research. These elements are mainly reflected in scientific research. A talent in P university commented: "*Now, for the university, it is talents who can publish papers and apply for research programs and funds." (Uni.P-TP-YT-19)*

However, senior leadership highlighted that they would pay more attention to creative achievements and scientific value, as well as the actual contribution of talents to the university, than to the number of published papers. However, in practice, as teaching at university is a subjective process, the external evaluation of teaching and research performance is typically prioritised. This is further explained in later sections. The academic interests and professional

goals of individuals should be prioritised over the scientific research requirements of the university, to enable individuals to realise their own value. This is exactly the new reality expressed by Chinese universities' universal definition of talent.

Therefore, building on these findings, there is a lack of consensus about the definition of talent, but a new reality of how talents are defined in Chinese universities is emerging: people who publish papers and apply for funding and research programs with success. Due to the single university ranking criteria, it gradually applies to all universities in China, not just research-intensive ones.

To sum up, according to the empirical findings, talent in Chinese universities is expected to possess the following characteristics:

(1) 'Political correctness' and 'Exemplary morality'.

(2) Certain knowledge and skills.

(3) Positive contribution to university success.

(4) Creative outcomes, mainly demonstrated through teaching and scientific research.

Those who meet the above standards are considered talents. However, each person's specialisation, capability and potential contribution are different. This means that most members of an organisation are potential talents. Regardless of individuals' efforts, objective realities may constrain their ability to reach their full potential. The recognition of talents is influenced by the academic structure, the demands of the development of particular disciplines, and the educational structure. For example, in recent years, the minimum requirements for teachers to be recruited by famous universities are doctoral degrees, and those with overseas study experience, or have Talents 'maozi' (Talent title assessed by certain Talent Programs) are viewed particularly favourably.

However, Chinese universities have not yet reached consensus on inclusive notions of TM or exclusive notions, so these views do not apply there.

In the context of Chinese universities, the term "talent" pertains to individuals distinguished by exceptional proficiency, skills, or accomplishments within academic, research, artistic, or

professional domains. Recognition of talent extends to those who demonstrate outstanding contributions, innovative thinking, and noteworthy achievements. The conceptualization of talent in Chinese universities encompasses a diverse spectrum, encompassing students, faculty, and researchers exhibiting excellence in academic performance, research endeavors, artistic pursuits, leadership, and contributions to the university community.

Furthermore, identification of talents in Chinese universities is predicated on their potential to significantly contribute to the advancement of knowledge, innovation, and the holistic development of the academic institution. This recognition of talent is characterised by adherence to principles of 'Political correctness' and 'Exemplary morality,' possession of specific knowledge and skills, positive contributions to university success, and the manifestation of creative outcomes, primarily evident in teaching and scientific research. The comprehensive nature of talent in Chinese universities underscores a nuanced perspective, valuing not only academic prowess but also ethical comportment, practical expertise, positive influence, and creative accomplishments.

5.2.2 Talent Management: to what extent is TM understood in Chinese universities?

Universities play a pivotal role in society, and have a strong influence on economic and social development and on the wider development of society, and TM is a powerful tool in enabling university to practically respond to organisational and societal demands. During the interview stage, some questions asked participants about TM awareness and understanding in Chinese universities. All parties lacked understanding of the term TM; they said they had not considered it, and phrased it as "managing talents". In spite of the fact that universities have taken several TM actions and, in practice, individuals at all levels of university life have been involved in these processes, most people are unaware of the role and value of TM. To provide insight on these issues, the responses of leadership, professors, and HR are examined, followed by a comprehensive discussion of their responses and the comprehensive interview results.

The vice president of P University stated that,

"In my opinion, TM in universities is a complex of people, knowledge, culture, ability, high

quality structures, innovation and other elements; and it is a learning organisation within the larger academic community construction. Its role is to, together with the academic community, complete the mission of playing a greater role in serving economic and social development within regions and industries. We mainly focus on two aspects: First, to establish a talent-caring mechanism, which means embedding the service concept into the whole process and field of TM in an all-round way, so that talents can feel a sense of belonging. Second, to build a talent identification and development mechanism based on classification management. For this, we would use different criteria to identify and evaluate talents." (Uni.P-LE-DE-03)

From this introduction, highlight several factors are highlighted.

First, TM in universities is centred around an academic community which ultimately shapes specific university cultures with the power of this community, promotes university reform and development, and makes universities more efficient and effective in serving the country and society. The characteristics of this community are based on disciplinary frameworks, knowledge areas and schools.

Second, TM necessitates understanding and respecting the academic character and value of different talents, and providing a free academic environment and academic development platform.

Third, currently, the university identifies, evaluates, and develops the talent pool through classified talent identification and development.

Professors held the most open attitudes; the statement below is characteristic of the openness with which one of a distinguished professor in P university responded during the interviews.

"You don't need to punch in or evaluate. If you give them leisure, they will inevitably read, write, give a class or communicate with students. It is important for universities to find and accommodate such people. If a university finds enough people of this type, it can basically 'govern by doing nothing', or only provide a kind of service management and still become a good university." (Uni.P-TP-IT-14)

From this statement, it is clear that:

First, there is a conflict between managerialism and the creativity of university talents, and university talents oppose excessively interventionist management and hope that TM can create space for freedom and autonomy.

Second, TM can focus more on serving talent.

Most administrations, when asked, said that they have never thought about how to define TM, and cannot answer perfectly. Nonetheless, they raised some interesting points.

> *"The prerequisties of effective talent management in university are a relaxed scholarly context, an inclusive management system, and creating enough development space for scholars. To produce good scientific research, talents themselves should have an open mind, and more importantly, the university should reduce their various burdens in management. However, this is still difficult to realise in view of our cultural background, so we must start at the level of attitude." (Uni.N-AD-HR-15)*

> *"To help talents become lifelong strivers, constantly break through their comfort zone, and become tenacious and resilient rather than fragile." (Uni.P-AD-OS-07)*

The following can be concluded from the above points:

First, the implementation of TM needs to start with raising awareness; once this has been achieved, measures that can help improve academic productivity, such as improving the environment, can be explored.

Second, an important function of TM should be to assist and support talent development.

5.3 Research Question Two: Implementations of TM in Chinese universities (From policy to Practice)

This section explores the implementation of TM from the perspective of talent identification, talent attraction, talent retention and talent development, showcasing interview data with university leaders, administrators, HR representatives as well as individuals.

5.3.1 Talent identification

The interview data collected on the definition of talent demonstrate that in Chinese universities, suggest that people are judged based on their published papers, and the identification of talent is based on papers and the ranking of journals. However, many believe that this approach is harmful to universities and talent development (Liang, 2022). Moreover, in 2020 the state clearly called for an end to only evaluating talent based on papers, professional titles, honours, education, and awards (the State Council). This raises the important question of how this issue is perceived by university administrators. The vice-president of P University provided this statement:

> *"Research is a slow process, it takes time, so we should be patient, not only by giving young teachers some responsibility for scientific research, but also by not putting too much pressure on them. It's a long way to go, after all."*

According to P University's HR director, in addition to papers, they evaluated talents based on scientific research status and peer reviews. Even in the absence of an outstanding paper, they will recognise talent as long as they can demonstrate their research potential and write good research proposals. N University, on the other hand, claims it no longer evaluates the quantity of papers, but focuses on the quality of scientific research instead. N University chose to implement the representative work system to identify talents, which limits the number of papers talents can display. More specifically, it stipulates that they submit no more than five papers that best represent their research abilities. Regarding this topic, he vice president of the University of N stated,

> *"Papers are not the entirety of scientific research, but the most important thing is that a researcher has his or her own representative achievements, regardless of whether it is in the field of scientific research, education, or some other accomplishment. Currently, we aspire to major scientific achievements with outstanding academic and social value, which determine the level of a university. This cannot be achieved by a single person in a paper. We need teams, and people who can lead them."*

Both case universities introduced distinct approaches to identifying talents. One assessed talent's scientific potential and research proposals through peer reviews, while the other adopted a representative work system, and identified talent by the work that best represents

the talent. This reflects the policy, but not necessarily the practice. There was an overwhelming rejection of paper-oriented talent identification in both the identification approach and in the attitude of the administrative leader. However, the present study suggests that the system has not necessarily implemented this approach in practice. However, an interview with one of the deans, who is responsible for policy implementation, highlighted a different perspective:

"In fact, papers and research programs can be overwhelming. We used to welcome all Ph.D.s, but now we identify more potential researchers based on their research programs and publications. If you don't fit in, get out of here as soon as possible to avoid further damage. I don't believe it's merely paper-oriented. It's also a responsibility for the talent themselves. For example, if he does not succeed in achieving the NSFC (a national funding body) within three years after his Ph.D graduation, his career may be over. Why is it three years? Since the Youth Funds have an age limit, if this opportunity is missed, it cannot be made up. Every step up in your career means you are not as good as others, not only behind your peers, but also behind newcomers." (Uni.N-AD-SL-20)

This suggest that the identification of talents in universities is mainly determined by each school in which the talent resides and by the HR departments. Moreover, the dean, currently the most authoritative expert on the subject, has the final say. This suggests that administrative power frequently overrides academic power, and in practice, peer review often changes into leadership review, or acquaintance review. Moreover, identification results are usually accompanied by material benefits, awards, promotions to professional titles, and other benefits.

HR professionals mainly introduced the specific practices of talent identification in the case universities, initially based on talent classification. In spite of the differences in approaches to TM, both universities use talent classification as a basis for identifying talent. These processes are closely linked; following the identification of and classification of talents, and clarification of job duties, performance management programs and talent training programs are completed, followed by an analysis of talent pools and further recruitment of appropriate talents.

Teachers are divided into three categories: teaching-oriented, research-oriented and

combined teaching and research. Figure 5.1 shows the paradigm of classification management. This diagram was based on feedback from HR representatives in N University, and P University has a similar framework.

Accordingly, administrators and auxiliary teaching staff have clear definitions and job descriptions. Therefore, different quantitative assessment systems are established for different categories of people, and further influence talent evaluation and performance management.
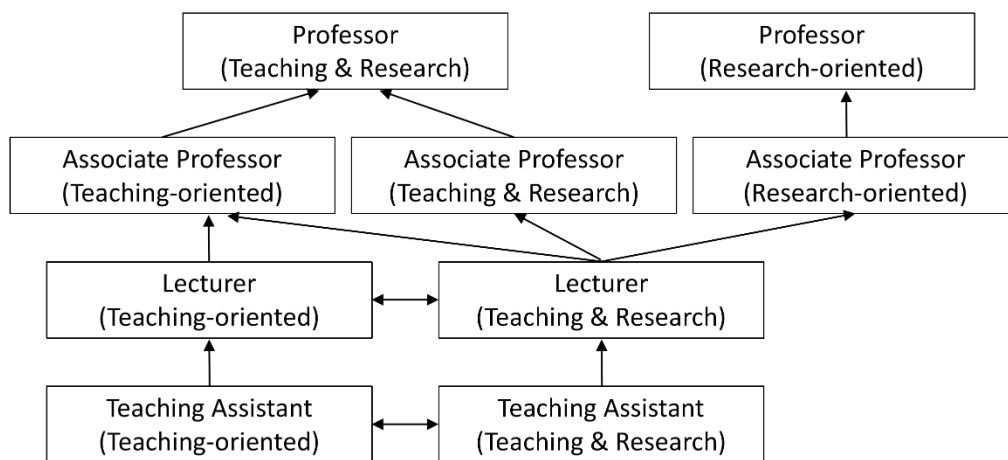
Figure 5.1 The paradigm of classification management (N University)

Through the classification of talents, university talent would gradually develop their own distinctive strengths and avoid weaknesses to become an all-round players. Teachers can give fully exploit their advantages in any field of teaching, scientific research and social services, and constantly strengthen their characteristics and expertise, so that their various potentials can be developed.

After the implementation of classified talent identification, the talent identification index is more targeted, the responsibilities of key positions and assessment content are clearer, and the evaluation criteria are easier to describe and quantify. Notably, key performance indicators are closely related to the development goals of a university from various perspectives, reflecting their strategies, and talent identification is also more focused on teaching and scientific research.

Furthermore, HR professionals of HR provided insight into importance of the factors influencing talent identification, which were used to rank the factors. ① Part-time social job.

② Executive position and the level of that position. ③ Personal academic reputation and status. ④ Educational background. ⑤ Personal academic ability. ⑥ Previous employing organisation.

The findings of the present study suggest that, when carrying out talent identification, HR managers paid more attention to surrounding factors and talents' social background, rather than the abilities of talents themselves.

The phrase part-time social job mainly refers to positions in professional associations, academic group or enterprise. Members of HR believe that it can reflect academic ability and influence, and may enhance the school's reputation in the community. More importantly, such positions can serve as resources and help increase a university's access to academic or social resources. In other words, they can strengthen a university's voice.

Secondly, HR professionals often pay attention to whether a candidate holds an executive position and the level of that position. Administrative leaders have better access to academic resources. The survey results on teachers perceptions also reveal the continuing influence of administration on research activities. Following their practical interests, many professors with excellent academic performance sometimes choose to pursue administrative positions. The reality is that once such professors have another responsibility, they are often preoccupied with administrative and bureaucratic affairs, and their original academic advantages gradually lose significance. Notably, more than 40% of the professional teachers interviewed said that if given the opportunity, they would prefer to take on the administrative leadership role. In addition to being able to obtain various honours, develop their reputations, and receive benefits, they would be more likely to gain professional titles in administrative positions.

Third, personal academic reputation and status include, but are not limited to, various academic titles, honours, awards, etc. In addition, academic stars tend to be noticed more easily, such as some scholars who often give high profile speeches and lectures in the media and some become Internet celebrities or well-known bloggers.

Fourth, education background. HR usually assess academic potential based on a talent's educational background, which refers to doctoral education, but some also consider the entire educational process. In their view, doctoral education prepares teachers for academic careers,

during which they will accumulate knowledge and skills and form their identity as academics. With an open and inclusive culture that values academic exploration, a good university will nurture candidates' academic interests and support them in becoming members of the academic community. In addition, as a candidate's 'key person', tutors inspire academic enthusiasm and are recognised by the HR department as significant resources for candidates.

Finally, the category of previous organisation includes the educational institute which potential talent graduated from, or their last employer; HR members notice its reputation, level of success, influence, hardware and software resources, and academic achievements. Their view is that an organisational culture of openness, mutual assistance and advocacy of academic research can help teachers develop good habits and achieve success more smoothly. Their previous organisation's scientific research communication and scientific research resources and platform is seen as a key part of a teacher's professional development.

In addition, the identification of talents is closely related to the professional promotion system of university talents. The traditional professional promotion system is largely the same in all Chinese universities and follows the following pattern: teaching assistant →lecturer →associate professor →professor → (sometimes Chief professor or distinguished professor). Currently, each university defines its professional promotion system according to its situation. As a result, N University still uses the old system, while P University has adopted a revised system in order to more effectively introduce overseas talents. HR representatives from P University gave an example:

> *"What professional titles should universities offer postdoctoral students returning from overseas? Lecturer? This does not encourage talent to come. Professor? For a 30-year-old young man, then how would a 50-year-old associate professor feel?" (Uni.P-AD-HR-01)*

Thus, P University has officially entered the era of the Principal Investigator with a tenure-track system. They have the freedom to undertake independent research, apply for independent funding and follow individualised performance standards. Therefore, it is often difficult to identify talents by comparing their professional positions. Talents' curriculum vitae, provides reliable data. Therefore, despite maintaining the old system, a new approach to talent recognition is being adopted and expanded, especially in relation to global talents.

Furthermore, talent identification requires clear strategic planning. If this is lacking, confusion follows. HR representatives described the confusion often encountered in their work:

"When identifying talents, the most critical thing is to examine the university itself, to know what key positions to place them in, whether it is necessary to create positions for talented persons, which is a difficult choice for me." (Uni.P-AD-HR-01)

"Talent is difficult to attract and retain. However, it is also vital that we identify talents in such a way that our limited funds and resources can be used in a targeted way, and we can focus on developing their potential in order to strengthen our emotional connection with them." (Uni.N-AD-OS-02)

A talent identification strategy is unclear when there is no clear strategic planning or no compliance with strategic requirements. It is the responsibility of HR to clarify this point, as HR begins the process of talent identification. Talent identification is regarded as serving the strategic development of the university. To facilitate a university's short-, medium-, and long-term development strategy, the administrative and managerial staff should constantly keep in mind what sort of talent pool is required, what kind of talent is needed, how to identify high potential talents, and how to highlight their importance.

In practice, HR members described some of the issues they encounter at work, of which the following statement is representative:

"Our university faces a talent shortage. It is usually academic leaders that we are expected to recruit. It's because there's no high-level talent in the field, which is a problem. If there's no expert in the field, who has the ability to identify the candidates who are going to be brought in?" (Uni.N-AD-HR-01)

The lack of a talent identification body is also a problem for HR, especially in relation to higher-level talent. Currently, a common strategy is to rely on the academic community composed of academic peers. Therefore, the construction of an academic community which can function to identify talent is crucial. Members of this community should have academic expertise in the field, but also have good academic ethics, judgment and credibility. With these characteristics, they can provide a convincing voice and identify real talents by relatively fairly evaluating their achievements.

5.3.2 Talent attraction

While universities have different requirements for introducing talent, individuals involved in academic research are preferred, and personal qualifications, scientific research abilities, and academic development potential are important factors. N University uses talent introduction as a shortcut to rapidly enhance its popularity and influence. Among the preferential policies included in the university talent attraction program are free housing, high salaries and professional titles for high-level talents, laboratories and start-up funds for scientific research, jobs for spouses and schools for children. Moreover, talent attraction is indeed inextricably linked to capital investment, but this is an extrinsic factor; a more important step is to create an environment conducive to the development of talents.

HR representatives believe that universities' main attraction to talents lies in the following elements: good reputation, salary and benefits, strong support for academic and career development, fair promotion and evaluation, independent teaching and research, working environment and academic atmosphere, and the city in which the university is located. Although there are many differences between the two case universities, these fundamental factors are largely similar, but for different talents, the priorities of the above factors are different depending on their own situation and personal needs.

Through interviews, HR representatives described some of their unpleasant experiences in recruiting talents:

(a) After receiving talent funding for a couple of years, many of the newly introduced talents resigned.

(b) Some professors defrauded several universities of talent program funds by job hopping.

(c) The introduced talents never remained in their posts for more than half a month continuously. They worked part-time at various universities, which negatively affected the development of the university.

(d) It took more than five years for a talent to be successfully recruited.

Talent introduction may harm a university in many aspects, including:

First, it will affect the realisation of the strategic goals. A university's development strategy determines how to introduce talent; failure to introduce talent strategically will inevitably delay the development process.

Second, it will cause financial losses. If universities fail to attract talent, they lose money and labor force, as well as the opportunity to invest in other areas.

Third, it may reduce the efficiency of human resource allocation. When talents are introduced, the original balance will be broken, the mutually beneficial relationship between employer and employees will be distorted, the working atmosphere and interpersonal relationships will change, and enthusiasm and creativity will be affected.

Fourth, it affects the stability of the talent team. Newly introduced talents may go untapped if the service is not effectively implemented. Inconsistent renumeration may also lead to a brain drain. This, in turn, may lead to a loss of hidden resources because brain drain will take away intangible assets like ideas, achievements and human resources.

However, from the perspective of individuals, what attracts talents to work in the universities?

Before working at university, talents often have experienced a long gradual learning process. They have acquired basic professional knowledge and skills, and started to internalise professional values, norms and ethics into their own behaviour, and started their academic career=. Their attitude to work, habits and value system not only affect their overall career development, but also deeply affects the growth of their students and the university's sustained development. Therefore, in order to effectively promote the development of TM and the attraction, retention and development of talents in universities, it is necessary to have an adequate understanding of talents' current situation. To achieve this, and to fully understand their thinking, an empathetic approach is needed.

The early career of university talents is typically characterised by high pressure and relatively low satisfaction (Austin, Sorcinelli and McDaniels, 2007). This raises a fundamental question: why do talents elect to work at universities?

Some respondents expressed idealised identification with their academic careers:

"I want to be a university teacher from the bottom of my heart. I have spent so much time learning and doing research on the food industry, and I am sure there is something which reflects this in my heart. On the one hand, I enjoy doing it myself; and on the other hand, I really want to keep doing it. Otherwise, it's a waste of time. Working at university means staying in a good scientific research environment and a stable teaching environment." (Uni.N-TP-RL-14)

"My family is very traditional and has had a deep influence on me since I was a child, and I have always known that the profession of university teaching is the first choice in my heart. I once read an article, and I was deeply impressed. It said, 'there is no other profession in the world like that of a university teacher; you can read your favorite books, and dive into your favourite knowledge, while earning a livable salary.'…… I think this might be the best answer in my heart. Although there are many disappointments and conflicts in reality, isn't this the case in all professions? …… Walking on campus, I feel very happy, which is not available in any other job." (Uni.P-TP-PT-11)

"…… I still like staying in the university, where I only compete with myself, without thinking about anything else; as long as I do my best for my own affairs, and apply enough effort in my own field, I can reach my goals and take pleasure in realizing them" (Uni.N-TP-TT-10)

Others, however, focused on more realistic considerations and trade-offs:

"For girls, it's good to be a teacher in a university… stable and decent job, free time, summer and winter vacations" (Uni.N-TP-TT-09)

"Now the competition is so fierce, I don't know why I feel like there are so many PhDs everywhere. In the past, as long as you had a doctoral degree, you could get a job at a university; but now universities are choosing talents, and the requirements are getting higher and higher, while preferential treatment is on the decrease. N University offers good conditions, and I am lucky." (Uni.N-TP-YT-12)

"Working at university offers high social recognition and is considered a respectable job. Especially after Covid-19, it is a stable job with steady income, although the income is not

high." (Uni.P-TP-YT-19)

"I live quite close to the university and feel the peace of this job. There are many sports lovers in the playground, the large green lawn, and I can also walk by the lake...... My colleagues and working partners are knowledgeable and respectable, have good character and are easy to get along with. ...... The income of a university teacher is not high, but for people with limited financial ambition, it is enough to meet normal expenses." (Uni.P-TP-HP-18)

"The work is hard and complicated, but the time is also flexible, which does not limit your working hours. If you want it, family and work can be balanced." (Uni.P-TP-YT-04)

The respondents expressed their understanding of work and challenges of university teachers. The flexibility in working hours, autonomy in terms of content, satisfaction in the process of knowledge exploration, and the contribution to the society, were all key factors which attracted them to this profession and inspired them to seek progression in this field. Broadly, responses can be categorised into those motivated by idealism, and those which focused on realistic considerations and trade-offs when determining their career choice.

There is a gap in resource acquisition between universities, and better ranked universities generally offer more opportunities for career advancement and development (Larbi and Ashraf, 2020). The interview data indicates that some talents with good academic background choose N University. The reasons for their choices can be summarised into three types:

First, academic deficiency.

"In terms of research conditions, development platform and academic development opportunities, Tsinghua University is definitely much better. I also hope to stay and work there when I graduate, and try to make some achievements at this research-oriented university, but my undergraduate degree does not meet their requirements, and this imperfection undermines my hope of staying and working there. My boss (tutor) also helped me fight for it, but I still could not, so I came back here (hometown university)." (Uni.N-TP-YT-13)

In the current context, the global academic labour market is increasingly significant and there is a higher degree of mobility than there was previously (Larbi and Ashraf, 2020). In response

to growing mobility and more intense competition for talent, Chinese universities are paying increasing attention to talent attraction and are becoming increasingly stringent in selecting talents. In addition, the expansion of doctoral enrollment in universities has increased the number of doctoral students and intensified the competition for talents over the past decade (Yang, 2012). The academic qualifications of candidates have risen accordingly, and the quality of the talent pool has increased, with only the best of this pool selected. Based on the survey conducted for this study, it is clear that universities are more inclined to choose talents with a strong publication record, who have studied at the highest ranked universities, or who have overseas study experience. The academic influence of tutors may also play a role in the selection process. In addition, some universities trace candidates' academic experience back to their undergraduate school, and some PhDs are excluded because their academic qualifications at a certain stage fail to meet the rigid requirements of universities.

Second, family factors. Family considerations are one of the reasons most frequently mentioned by respondents. Talents at university face many material issues, such as family relationships, transportation, income requirements, housing prices and so on, which may impact their career choice. For example, a respondent stated: *"I chose N University in exchange for a job offer for my wife (Uni.N-TP-IT-23).*

Most PhD graduates, who are typically in their early 30s, face the dual, interwoven pressures of the family life cycle and the professional life cycle. Family harmony and happiness provide a steady flow of spiritual strength for teachers' development, which is the backbone of their work (Jiang & Deng, 2017). Therefore, the humane policy of providing jobs for spouses has attracted a large number of talents, and has prevented talents from needing to live apart from their families. It has also enabled talents to devote themselves to their work, which has become an important factor in attracting talents.

> *"I have been studying away from home and rarely get together with my parents. My parents' growing white hair encouraged me to decide to attend a university close to home so that I can take good care of them." (Uni.N-TP-KM-17)*

Influenced by a traditional concept of family, many interviewees are grateful for their parents' hard work in supporting them during their childhood and adolescence, and are eager to fulfill their filial obligation and compensate for their absence from the family for many years.

Because 'Xiao' (filial piety) is the core of traditional Chinese culture, children are duty-bound to support and assist their parents. Therefore, university teachers' career security and deep sense of home often guide them to return to their hometown and seek employment at local universities.

Third, risk avoidance in a competitive environment.

> *"The competition in research universities is super fierce, and there are piles of PhDs about my age, all of whom are too brilliant! They are excellent people! The competition is super serious, and I don't know who can 'be alive' in the end. I don't want to work so hard… In the universities located in Northwest China, where there are relatively slightly weaker universities… I can still be regarded as a 'talent'". (Uni.N-TP-IT-23)*

Improving academic productivity and administrative efficiency has become a key requirement in many universities (Popenoe, 1973). Universities are constantly strengthening the examination and evaluation of talents, and the regulations and requirements for career promotion are increasingly strict. The competition between talents to achieve career development is becoming more intense as a result. For the sake of their future development and opportunities for promotion, some talents would rather choose universities with relatively little competition than universities with abundant talents.

However, the talents who have achieved outstanding performance may engage in job-hopping and move to a better university with better ranking, or in a better city, and receive a higher salary. One talent stated: *"I feel that after years of research accumulation, I have some confidence to get more opportunities. I also feel that my value has not been well utilised here and there is still potential to be tapped. I think it is time for me to consider stepping onto a bigger platform, and I am ready." (Uni.N-TP-HE-24)*

"Changing university… If I change, of course, it had better be to go to a better one, from good universities to top ones, and from the top to some overseas universities…" (Uni.P-TP-HP-10)

In practice, P University has acquired more talents with better academic backgrounds, who are ambitions and have clear plans and goals in scientific research. Facing the pressure of an 'up or out' system, they believe that it is still a good place to support them in producing outstanding achievements, and prepare them to receive an offer for a good position in a

stronger, more competitive university. In other words, although the talents of P University hope to succeed in the broader academic competition, at the same time, they regard their university as a platform and springboard for their career development.

5.3.3 Talent retention

When preferential recruitment policies are used in general to attract talent to universities, brain drain is also prevalent, and retaining talent remains an urgent challenge. In our interview, an administrator of P University confidently stated: *"It can't be said that the university provides its talents with the best economic treatment, but it is certainly the university that respects and supports talents the most and provides the best service." (Uni.P-AD-DH-01)*

However, P University, as a first-class higher education institution of high education, also has challenges in retaining talent. *"Yes, we also suffer from brain drain, but I think it is understandable for people to move up, and talent flow is quite normal." (Uni.P-AD-HR-01)*

The university spares no effort to create various conditions for excellent talents, in particular by intensely focusing on the development of young talents, offering favourable policies, and, where possible, offering time and funding to support research. This approach is undertaken in the hope that talents appreciate the university's attitude to them.

Among the main reasons for brain drain are dissatisfaction with personal development, high pressured and demanding work, and an inability to adapt to the university management system and culture.

When asked how they plan to retain talent, administrators gave an ideal response. According to administrators, it is imperative that universities create a sense of belonging and accomplishment in order to retain talents. Talents attach the most value to the environment, and universities must create a mechanism to enable talents to showcase their value. This will enable universities to gain talents' allegiance. The reality is that faculties with good internal management and a strong academic atmosphere have an advantage in terms of talent retention. In addition, according to HR representatives, whether introduced talents are able to concentrate on their work and use their abilities to the fullest extent depends on the system as a whole. To retain employees in a university with limited resources, support services are essential.

As mentioned, N University is significantly different from P University. The issue of how to attract and retain talents deeply troubles this university. A member of the HRM department of N University expressed her great dissatisfaction about losing talents:

"We spent a lot of energy and money to train people, but often end up the outcome of 'doing the work for others'." (Uni.N-AD-HR-15)

While its number of talents is growing rapidly, N University has to consider their retention policies following a number of significant personnel losses. From the perspective of N University, the departure of an individual may be bearable, but the departure of a team is catastrophic. The university has spent large sums of money building experimental equipment and infrastructure for research in the natural sciences, but without excellent scientific research teams it will be unable to make full use of this infrastructure.

The specific practices of N University include:

First, change the means by which universities compensate talents. For example, if the annual salary of a talent is 200,000 yuan, only 6,000 yuan will be paid every month, and the rest will be paid after passing the performance evaluation. In addition, in order to recruit talent, universities might offer talent recruitment rewards of 300,000 yuan. Talent must return 200,000 yuan if they do not pass the performance assessment; if they pass this assessment, they will be offered a 15 year, rather than 5 years, working period. Young PhDs, who have recently graduated, are typically highly energetic, but lack clear self-understanding. In addition, due to the heavy workload and great uncertainty of scientific research, a large number of them fail to complete the assessment task within the specified assessment period, and subsequently face reductions in pay, demotions or terminations and must pay compensation for liquidated damages.

Second, complicated dismissal procedures which carry a high penalty. N University signs an 8-year contract with its new teachers. After recruitment, employees must sign a supplementary clause, which stipulates a complex dismissal procedure. When a teacher asks to leave, they must undertake a complicated process which delays the process, taking from one to three years. Moreover, teachers who wish to leave will be unable to find a new job, and may even be compelled to participate in a lawsuit.

Three reasons motivate universities to do this: (a) To buy time and keep their employees' files. Universities should be able to continue to use talent's research achievements. Moreover, they may need to reach a certain proportion of high-level talent when applying for state funding or university rankings. (b) To drain the energy and time of those talents. The process exhausts talents and impacts their job prospects. As a result, they may have second thoughts, and cease job-hopping, enabling the university to achieve its goal of retaining staff. (c) Taking a hard line and following the hard exit process discourages other talent from leaving.

Third, the practices mentioned above, particularly the reputational damage caused by the second component, and the underdeveloped region in which N University is located, has resulted in N University struggling to attract new talent. As a solution, N University is supporting its faculty members who do not hold doctorates to pursue full-time or part-time doctoral programs. Universities sign Ph.D. candidates with promises of pay packages. If such candidates do not stay, they will need to pay multimillion-dollar compensation. However, some teachers receive Ph.Ds through their own efforts, and found that they were unable to take advantage of the pay package they had received from the university. Moreover, when they tried to leave, they had to pay large sums in compensation, and felt cheated. Others went through an online doctoral program, which has a negative impact on teachers who are in full-time Ph.D. programs, undermines basic fairness, sharpens teachers' desire to leave, and exacerbates the loss of talent.

This study also incorporates individuals' insights. When talents begin their university career, a tension between ideality and reality gradually appears and does not diminish with the passage of time and the accumulation of experience. In the interviews conducted in this study, it was found that many teachers in universities have thought of leaving their positions. There are specific reasons for this, which are as follows:

First, feeling tired: heavy workload and stress.

"During my 19 years working in N University, I put in about 16 hours a day, from 6 o'clock in the morning to 10:30 pm, which is about 16 hours, remove the lunch and dinner time, it may be between 12 hours to 14 hours, but in this period of time I am 100% committed, but my sense of self is very poor… I am exhausted. I have asked myself more than once, after

working here for so many years, do I only regard N University as a means to make a living? If I just want to make a living, I have many ways to earn my own living." (Uni.N-TP-RL-14)

As a result of the ten-year expansion of student enrollment in Chinese universities, the sheer scale of students is a key feature of the Chinese university system and the acute shortage of teachers is a major challenge. Due to these factors, talents in Chinese universities often have high workloads and are required to undertake heavy teaching loads. Teaching is the most fundamental work at university; however, an excessive teaching load is not only detrimental to teaching quality, but also dampens talents' enthusiasm and investment in teaching and limits the time they have available for research. Having to deal with various demands from schools, students, colleagues, and other stakeholders, results in great stress, exhaustion, anxiety, fatigue, and other negative emotions. "I felt like I was an old-fashioned TV with seven or eight audiences who kept twisting the switch to change channels and they could not have heard me scream. I was exhausted (Xi, 2005)." This paragraph comes from an article named 'dancing in double shackles -- the confession of a young teacher in a university'. It clearly expresses the fatigue and struggle that talents face in universities.

In summary, the conflict between heavy teaching loads and balanced professional development has become a major challenge for Chinese universities and limits talents' ability to engage in long-term professional development. The interviews conducted in this study also found that talents in N University are more troubled by this particular challenge than those in P University. This is because P University, in an effort to tackle teacher shortage, has specially introduced a new talent pool of 'supplementary teachers' with good academic backgrounds to solve the teacher shortage.

Second, sense of being lost: academic identity is looked down upon.

"There is a strong sense of superiority among people at key universities. The longer I work, the wider the gap between me and my classmates and friends with similar academic abilities becomes, and I even begin to doubt my ability to do scientific research." (Uni.P-TP-HP-10)

"Senior leaders believe that my scientific research ability must be very strong, because I

graduated from QSH University, and I have also published high-level papers in top international journals. I am eager to record some achievements too. However, when I came here, I never got any programs, or funds and did not publish high-quality papers. I applied unsuccessfully for NSFC every year for three years. My former schoolmates easily got it. Of course, the universities that they are working for are much better than mine. I am super anxious, because the leaders have high expectations for me, and there has been no result, I am stressed. Now I am questioned by others, and I really need to prove myself." (Uni.N-TP-YT-13)

University rankings make it easier for economic, cultural and social capital to flow to well-known institutions (Yuan et al., 2019). The highest ranked universities are stereotypically viewed as enjoying higher social reputations, having more influence on subject matter, and having stronger faculty. Due to this, public perceptions of teachers at different levels of universities differ, and people frequently feel uncomfortable when comparing themselves with their peers. Similarity in age, status, income, and occupation between close friends, classmates, and colleagues encourages stimulating comparisons (Popenoe, 1973). The career development gaps caused by individuals working at lower tier universities impacts university teachers' social status, which may impact their relationship with their peers. Moreover, feeling that social status is diminishing causes interviewees to feel uncertain about their future, resulting in turnover and a feeling of loss.

Third, struggle: an administrative dilemma.

"Professional title promotion and assessment standards are set by the administrative department of the university. They change almost every year and are becoming more difficult. I need to spend a lot of time completing the teaching tasks, and also take on tutoring for competitions, internships, papers and other work. I have very little time to focus on scientific research, which makes it difficult to complete the assessment requirements and access the corresponding performance rewards package." (Uni.N-TP-PT-19)

"From the first day of working at N University, you must do part-time administrative work, and you can only leave your office after four years, but if there is no suitable person to replace you, you may still be unable to get rid of it. In those years when I was engaged in

administrative work, I felt that it seriously delayed my professional progress. I gave lectures during the day, and prepared next day lectures at night ... after class, I continued to do administrative work, and basically had no energy to do any other scientific research work related to professional evaluation". (Uni.N-TP-TT-10)

In addition, some other teachers also reported that school 'chores' occupy too much of their time and energy. However, when this respondent was asked what she meant by a chore, she answered casually, "Working for the leaders." She said no more this topic. In universities, apart from teaching and scientific research, every talent will undertake some administrative or transactional work, as a part of the job.

One interviewee from P University is the assistant of an academic leader in the university. In addition to his own teaching tasks, he is required to assist the academic leader in all aspects of discipline development, for example, student supervision, progression report, viva, subject evaluation, etc. Especially during the time when undergraduate teaching was evaluated by the Ministry of Education, he was assigned by the college to a special team charged with preparing for the evaluation. He found that this experience wasted too much of his time and energy. He said, *"I don't think this kind of work has much effect on my professional development. I prefer to be in the laboratory. Every subject evaluation is about writing reports. I had to contact people everywhere to ask for information. They were annoyed, and I was, too. To be honest, I never wanted to do it in the first place, but how can I say no?" (Uni.P-TP-YT-19)*

As was discussed in the previous section, funding and published papers are important benchmarks in university performance evaluation systems. As part of their effort to expand their academic influence, local universities actively recruit teachers with strong scientific research records and doctoral degrees, and require them to give additional lectures while strengthening the university's scientific research output.

"Many people think that our teachers are at leisure. It's okay to go home after class, and there are two holidays per year to enjoy. However, they don't know that we have to prepare lectures when we stay at home. Each class is 45 minutes, and a whole class of mine is usually 90 minutes. When I give this 90-minute lecture, I may need 5 hours to prepare. It's also working hours. I can only say that more is paid and the payback period is longer." (Uni.P-TP-YT-19)

In recent years, the university administration has been formulating strict professional and performance evaluation methods for measuring the effectiveness of teachers' teaching, scientific research, and tutoring. However, the pressure to teach, tutor, and conduct scientific research requires a lot of shadow work, which leads to burn out and time fragmentation that make university teachers tense. Ren & Liu (2021) characterises the current situation of talent in universities in this way: insomnia in the academic world.

Fourth, will not lie down: hindered professional development.

"I have been employed for a long time, and I am also under the pressure of 'up or out'. Some achievements have been made through my own efforts; however, there are too many elite candidates who are waiting for a promotion. And our school is still recruiting people every year. Although I have worked hard, I can only be regarded as average, and there are only about two promotion places in our school every year. I feel that I may not be promoted within the six-year employment period. Now I'm getting a little depressed, and I'm anxious every night before falling asleep. After so many years of hard work, I am afraid it will come to nothing." (Uni.P-TP-YT-19)

"I can still find a way to produce papers if seriously put myself to work, but it doesn't help on applications for research programs and funding. You can't apply to programs and fundings successfully without 'Guanxi', and even then, people still think that regional programs are not convincing enough, and only national programs and fundings are respectable. However, I really never expected national funds, because it is like buying lottery tickets. Now I rack my brains every day to think how to achieve it, but I can't reach it at all. It's depressing." (Uni.N-TP-TT-10)

"The more programs and funds you have, the easier to apply for a new one. On the contrary, the fewer programs there are, the harder it is to apply for one. It's a kind of vicious cycle." (Uni.P-TP-YT-20)

Based on the survey conducted in this study, some schools broke down the performance tasks and distributed them to teachers individually, describing how many national scientific programs should be joined, how much scientific research funds should be received, how many CSSCI or SCI papers should be published, and how many literary and referenced teaching textbooks should be awaiting published. However, funding, papers and other scientific

performance measures in academia are concentrated on well-known scholars or teams due to the Matthew-effect (Van Looy *et al.*, 2004; Bol, de Vaan and van de Rijt, 2018). In terms of universities' power structures, some functional departments hold the decision-making power of academic resources, which verges on a monopoly, and most low-level teachers struggle to gain access to academic resources, hindering their professional development.

> *"This platform is not conducive to contacting higher-level research groups to jointly carry out research work." (Uni.P-TP-RL-16)*

> *"My professional field holds very high-level international academic annual conferences every year, but I attended the conference use my own scientific research funds instead of university funding." (Uni.N-TP-PR-04)*

> *"The equipment is very expensive and our school doesn't have the budget." (Uni.N-TP-IT-05)*

Having a strong research platform is essential for the career development of university teachers; on the one hand, it provides rich academic resources, while on the other, it facilitates cooperation between research groups. It is important for some university talents to participate actively in various scientific research activities to improve their academic ability. If university resources are limited, teachers do not see any hope of professional development, and as a result, they inevitably decide to enter a different field with more development opportunities.

In addition, the development of talents in universities not only necessitates a certain knowledge base, but also requires constantly updating. This is not only an individual matter, but also needs to be supported by a variety of academic development opportunities provided by universities. In order to improve the teaching and research ability of talents, and increase the trust and loyalty of talents, both N University and P University have introduced a series of measures to provide more opportunities to develop talents. However, in practice, these opportunities are insufficient and continue to be a major source of dissatisfaction.

Although university leaders have repeatedly emphasised the importance of the development of talents, in reality, talents still feel that universities do not consistently encourage or support their personal development, but rather restrain it. For example, the arrangement of training

opportunities was seen as unfair and sometimes in practice was far from the policy espoused.

Fifth, feeling helpless: low income and financial pressure

"Take me as an example. My students work at BTA after graduating, with a starting salary was about 1.2 times mine, their tutor. And my younger doctoral school-peers worked at enterprises after they graduated, and their salary was about 3 times mine. You can't say that their ability is 1.2 to 3 times higher than mine, can you? The stronger the professional application and the better the ranking of universities, the stronger the contrast will be."
(Uni.P-TP-IT-14)

"Young teachers always have difficulties in scientific research, so their income rarely goes up. Although there is the 'halo effect' of being a university teacher, I just cannot afford to keep myself. My family's economic conditions are OK, and my parents often subsidise me. But I don't really know how those teachers from rural area survive." (Uni.P-TP-YT-19)

"Low income, poor treatment, no funding, economic backing is not strong, I can not have more research outcomes." (Uni.P-TP-YT-12)

Income is a key consideration when individuals choose their career, since salaries and funds are symbols of an institution's status and indicate one's value (Kennedy, 1997). Although the salary level which universities offer has improved, the interview data highlighted that low salaries are still the main factor in talent turnover. Moreover, low salaries impact the confidence of talents in university teaching posts.

Due to the restrictions of local economic development and local financial support, N University is under economic stress, but its talent reward policy is second to none. However, it still has a salary gap in relation to P University which is located in an economically developed area. Notably, the talents of P University are troubled by the issue of income. Although their income is much higher, the cost of living in the region is relatively high, especially for young teachers. According to the interviews conducted for this study, income has a very significant impact on lifestyle, professional development and even talents' family relations.

University talents, especially young talents, at this stage, should accomplish many great things in life, such as falling in love, establishing their own families, marrying and having children,

purchasing houses and taking care of their parents. University salaries make this difficult, and also affect talents' work and psychological state severely. Some young talents try to solve their economic difficulties through other ways, which directly or indirectly affect their professional development. A teacher at P University admitted that his motivation for working part-time during his spare time and during university holidays was to earn more money. A decent life needs a high income and as a guarantee, and this has become a major concern for many talents in universities.

5.3.4 Talent development

According to our research, talent development in universities is under the leadership of the Faculty Development Center (FDC). Both case universities established an FDC under the guidance of the Ministry of Education's policy in 2012, which played a positive role in promoting the comprehensive development of university teachers. The specific functions of the FDC include teacher training, consulting services, teaching research, quality assessment, and resource sharing, among other things. Nearly all Chinese universities have established similar FDCs, whose operation status directly influences teacher development.

Both FDCs in the two case universities have a relatively strong administrative structure, because they are positioned as professional organisations with administrative functions, and given some administrative power. Interviews with managers of FDC revealed that their main role is faculty training, which is characterised as on-the-job training and a form of further education.

At P University, the holistic faculty training is not the only indicator attached; instead, the university focuses its attention primarily on objective differences between different subject backgrounds and research orientations, as well as the individual needs of teachers. The scope of training has expanded from pre-employment training to full-fledged employment training for all teachers. In addition, the training provided encompasses a number of topics such as professional knowledge, teaching techniques, ethics, etc. Notably, the university's training approach increasingly follows a modular structure, in which different modules can be combined freely.

Unlike P University, N University does not have a flexible choice and withdrawal mechanism,

and generally adopts a mandatory centralised training model. Although P University's FDC is designed to serve the entire faculty, its activity is dictated by university demands. Under the Ministry of Education's faculty development policy, the education administrative department has standardised and controlled all aspects of pre-job training relatively thoroughly. Most universities in China have little control over how, when, where, and what training is implemented. In contrast, the foundational teaching and research department is more relaxed in their development of teachers. Every week, Chinese universities require departments to hold professional development sessions. The implementation of this requirement, however, in the P University context, was affected by several factors which did not function as intended. For example, the allot time was not guaranteed, and sometimes other functions were given priority. A teacher stated that *"Department faculty development activities primarily serve the purpose of bringing together teachers who cannot meet in class, in order to establish a collective affiliation." (Uni.P-TP-YT-19)* She noted that her personal accomplishments are *"understanding some things happening at the school recently and doing tasks assigned by my leader"*.

Therefore, P University is not yet able to meet the real needs of its teachers; in other words, the FDC's strategic positioning is inconsistent with the priorities of the university. At present, the FDC pays more attention to the improvement of teaching skills of university teachers, it is clear from the process of talent identification that universities are keen to see more scientific research output from teachers. It is, therefore, clear that the development projects of FDC in P University have failed to attract the attention of leadership, and the services provided have struggled to meet the individualised needs of teachers. As a result, the FDC's actual status does not reflect its true value. In addition, it overlaps with the Office of Academic Affairs, the Human Resources Office and other departments in terms of work functions, and as a result of these conflicting interests, the administrative departments of universities become embroiled in a power struggle.

Moreover, talent classification management in universities accomplishes not only the identification of talent and the evaluation of performances, but also enables talent development planning. However, the efficacy of talent development is is undermined by its failure to account for age differences. Teachers of different ages and generations compete on the same track, affecting the composition of talent pool and the harmony of the academic

ecosystem. Talent development has focused primarily on young teachers; however, many older teachers abandon their performance goals and receive low performance evaluations because they are unwilling to commit. According to HR, more than 70% of scientific research and teaching results are generated by individuals aged from 31 to 40 years old. Also, there is some significant output from teachers from 41 to 50. The scientific research output of this group exceeds that of teachers under 30, since this is the period of doctoral study and most universities require the publication of papers before graduation, which is also a period of rapid personal growth. However, teachers produce very little after the age of 50, and even less after the age of 60 (60 is the mandatory retirement age for university teachers in China, and although universities still offer professor employment, some teachers choose to retire). According to HR, natural science output typically peaks at around 40 and humanities and social sciences output typically peaks around 50.

Considering this, it would be reasonable to argue that talent development process should take age into account. Teachers over 50 years old are capable of committing to performance, but nonetheless, psychologically, they are preparing for retirement. As a result of such early retirements, the university not only loses its unique knowledge resources (Schreurs *et al.*, 2011), but also increases its labour shortage (van Dam, van der Vorst and van der Heijden, 2009). This is a highly significant research gap, because professors in universities can continue their academic careers before and after retirement, assuming they have sufficient knowledge, experience, ability, vision and enthusiasm. Currently, some distinguished researchers are formally awarded honorary professorships upon retirement, and they are committed to staying involved with the university, but this does not always occur. Universities should consider providing talent retirement plans to motivate employees to continue contributing to the university after a certain age.

This study conducted in-depth interviews around what talents truly need, and the obtained answers are as follows.

First, professional development.

The professional development needs of university talents involve both teachers' professional roles in their research specialisation and in teaching, because university talents are not only

teachers, but also researchers in a specific field. Professional development is one of the most important aspects of talent development in universities. Florian Znaniecki (1940) noted in his book, 'The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge', that an academic career has a recognised purpose, that is, to combine continuous scientific productivity with strict academic standards in the context of a higher academic institution. Correlatively, people without the capacity to produce scientific work cannot become permanent members of such institutions. Therefore, at every stage of their career, all the products of an individual working in this sphere, including articles and presentations, have to be carefully assessed by the official academic community.

In the interviews, talents frequently mentioned professional development and the improvement of their ability to conduct scientific research, especially in so far as this ability relates to joining scientific research programs, acquiring research funds, and publishing papers and books. At the same time, almost all the talents who participated in the interviews linked their professional development with career promotion, because scientific research achievements are directly related to receiving professional titles.

The talents of N University generally expressed their relatively weak position in terms of scientific research. Due to the importance of scientific research in the university and its close connection with financial benefits, these talents expressed their determination to development professional, as well as an awareness of various related trade-offs. Their weak position in scientific research results from their lack of scientific research experience on the one hand, and the set of hidden rules which have long governed the academic world on the other hand. Their final goal is clear: receiving a promotion and, correlatively, new professional titles. While the talents interviewed described their purposes as more or less utilitarian, this reflects their practical needs and choices in the current environment of China's higher education system.

Interestingly, however, when asked what ways they could better promote their career development, talents at N University were more inclined to refer to external behaviour strategies, such as participating in study abroad programmes and academic conferences, joining academic associations and groups, networking with well-known scholars and establishing relationships, etc. In addition, research methods training, improving their understanding of data analysis, paper writing, and training in academic standards and ethics

training were rarely mentioned, despite these factors being typically understood as fundamental to professional development. This is perhaps further evidence of the institutional rules of universities; because of the prevailing management rules in the university field, accessing institutionalised cultural capital (such as degrees, rewards and professional titles) is their primary concern, which has the same impact on the professional development needs of talents and the behavioural strategies they adopt.

The talents of P University generally studied at well-known universities under famous professors, and they themselves have strong scientific research skills after years of training. P University, as one of the highest-ranked universities, also provides not only the halo effect, but also rich academic research resources, learning resources and platform supports. However, due to the pre-employment system of "up or out", talents' professional development needs are even stronger. Their ability to develop professionally is a matter of "life and death", because it determines their job security. *"Ten high-level papers would be published in three years, if it could be completed, you are welcomed. If not, please leave here voluntarily, it is not the right place for you". (Uni.P-TP-YT-12)*

In addition, the interviews suggested that talents pay far less attention to personal development than professional development and organisational development, and career planning and mental health were rarely mentioned preactively. When talking about stress, the an interviewee was asked , "Does the university provide psychological counseling?"

> *"The Mental Health Counseling Center is mainly student facing and solves their psychological issues. How can teachers go? Besides, psychological counseling can't solve our stress and issues. It is more important to solve our own affairs by ourselves and enhance our own strength!" (Uni.N-TP-HE-24)*

This interviewee revealed that their university ignored some aspects of talent development. As well as demonstrating talents' acquiescence to this situation, it was clear from the interview data that the help that the university provides to talents is regarded as optional. Talents prefer to rely on their own strength to solve problems of personal development, which nonetheless reflects some deficiencies in the services provided by universities for talent development.

When asked about career planning, respondents often referred to their promotion goals in terms of professional titles, and feel that "it is enough to know what and when to do". The talents of P University who are facing the 'up or out' process discussed whether they plan to remain at the university or apply for another position elsewhere. It can be seen that in Chinese universities, career planning exists primarily in written formal policies linked to induction training, and has not been transformed into a supportive and diagnostic service.

Talents are eager for good interpersonal communication and cooperation, particularly when they face academic stress, which exists both among colleagues on campus and with peers off campus. They typically emphasised "communication", "cooperation", "sharing", "inspiration" and "promotion" as highly desirable and necessary to their academic careers.

> *"Interpersonal relationships are very important. The more people you know, the more information you get, and the easier it is to do things. If leaders know you and value you, they will give you more support, and more opportunities mean better development. The relationship between academic circles is also very important. It is advantageous to meet professors and experts from different universities, and it makes it easier to apply for funding and publish papers. xxx is very good at establishing relationships, but I can't learn it because of my personality. "(Uni.P-TP-RL-10)*

Talents in universities are not only eager for success in their field, but also need organisational belonging and personal development. Only by providing them with appropriate development opportunities and platforms can universities be effective in TM.

Second, a good working environment.

Organisational development needs here refer to the ability of the organisational to cater to talents needs. Talents need to fit in the working environment, become involved in various internal groups, understand the strategy and mission of the university, establish good relations with co-workers, and also access necessary information and services provided by the university. Organisations help talents understand organisational expectations, and at the same time offer them opportunities to develop the existing organisational culture instead of simply copying it (Tierney and Lanford, 2018). As talents become familiar with the context of the organisation and establish good relationships, they simultaneously inherit and develop the

organisational culture and promote their own development.

> *"Compared to my colleagues, I was at a disadvantage because I did not have a social network of my own." (Uni.P-TP-YT-20)*

> *"Young colleagues are afraid their peers are better than them; older colleagues have some teaching experience, but are hesitant to share too much on the job." (Uni.P-TP-HP-10)*

Chinese culture is a 'Renqing' culture, which has emphasised 'Guanxi' since ancient times, and a person's interpersonal network therefore plays an important role in his or her life. (Chan, 2006; Wang, 2007; Chang, 2012). There has long been a 'Guanxi' mechanism at Chinese universities based on cooperative research relationships, regional location, and connections based on educational background, which helps talents quickly integrate into the academic circle, acquire organisational resources, and obtain practical knowledge (Guo & Zhou, 2011). During the interviews, some interviewees comment on their unable to integrate into the 'Guanxi' circle of their units and establish their own professional identity and sense of belonging.

> *"It is important to take the initiative to take care of the students, but some students pretend not to know the teachers after exams." (Uni.P-TP-YT-12)*

The balance of teacher-student relationships in traditional education favours students. Some interviewees rarely received receive positive feedback from students and felt less accomplished as a result. Teachers' mental health, job burnout, and turnover rates are all affected by feeling misunderstood and ignored (Lee, 2019).

> *Interviewee: "Some information is not accessible, and if you don't know it, you will miss an opportunity. For example, some funding application will not be published on the website or conveyed to everyone after they are issued. Sometimes, when the results are published, you know about the opportunity, but it's too late. It may be that the college leaders directly appointed people to apply."*

> *Question: "Is this information important to you?"*

> *Answer: "Of course, you don't know it, and you will lose the chance to apply, which means that you miss an opportunity for winning a competition." (Uni.N-TP-YT-18)*

In addition, talents also expressed a strong demand for information access and communication at work, especially in reference the information and resources needed which are beneficial to their professional development and constructive feedback from co-workers and leaders.

5.4 Research Question Three: Aligning TM with Strategy and Organisational Culture

This section focuses on describing the different development strategies and cultures of each case university at various stages, along with the resulting changes in TM.

5.4.1 Strategy and TM practices

P University

It has always been P University's mission to train the best, most innovative talents. The university is built upon undergraduate education, and integrating postgraduate education is therefore a natural opportunity for development. At P University, staff adhere to a holistic model of education and educate each student to possess the comprehensive characteristics of 'general knowledge, professional ability, innovative thinking, practical ability, global vision, and social responsibility'. In 2017, P University developed a first-class university construction plan based on the plan of national 'Double first-class' construction. P University established its development goal in relation to his profound historical and disciplinary advantages, and proposed to build a comprehensive, research-oriented and high-ranking international university with holistic strengths by 2020, enter the ranks of world-class universities around 2030, and enter the forefront of world-class universities around 2050.

By implementing the strategies outlined below, P University aims to be a world-class university that is oriented towards sustainable development.

First, participate in internationalisation, follow the national strategy, train innovative talents of the highest calibre.

Second, reform the educational model, break through the professional boundary, and link undergraduate education and graduate education.

Third, gather high-quality resources and provide space for individual development of talents.

Based on this, P University established the strategy of strengthening the university with talents, establishing world-class educational standards, improve the high-level TM system, and establish a high-level innovation team.

Table 5.2 Strategy and TM of P University

Timeline	Aim	Strategic objectives	TM strategy	TM strategic objectives	Key points of current TM
By 2020	Build a comprehensive, research-oriented and high-ranking international university in a holistic way	Significant achievements have been made in serving the country's exceptional science and technology.	Strengthening the university with talents	Training and introducing a group of leading talents	①Emphasise TM under the leadership of the Party. ②Serve the national strategy and increase the efforts to attract, retain and develop talents. ③Develop TM system, and optimise the talent evaluation. ④Integrate superior resources and guarantee talents support.
By 2030	Enter the ranks of world-class universities	A number of important original innovation achievements.		A group of world-class talents and innovation teams will be assembled to form a talent pool matching the highest-ranked world-class universities	

By 2050	Enter the forefront of world-class universities	First-class innovations continue to emerge		Gather academics who are the strongest in their field.	

With a TM system that has always been centred on 'assessing the situation', P University's approach is constantly shifting relative to its own positioning and strategies, and has been a pioneer in carrying out reform, leading and driving the development of TM systems in Chinese universities. This study provides insight into the practices of TM in P University, which is closely tied with its strategy as the practice and strategy are mutually complementary. There are too many details to list, but in the following section some important practices that P University has made in order to fulfill its development strategy are introduced.

TM Policy Orientation

① Emphasise TM under the leadership of the Party. P University has established a leading talent work group with the secretary of the Party Committee and the president as the double leaders, which is the highest decision-making body for TM. As part of a strategic seminar, the leading group systematically categorised talents working in each department, stipulated the responsibilities of each talent, and required each school to conduct a talent meeting to define short-term, mid-term, and long-term plans for attracting, retaining, and developing talent. In this way, a systematic approach was adopted. Additionally, the construction of talent pool is included in the annual assessment task of the college.

② Serve the national strategy and increase its efforts to attract, retain and develop talents. A particular focus of P University is to develop key subject areas that are most needed in relation to the development of China at a national level and to provide support for those subjects. It has attracted global talents, established a dynamic management mechanism to better organise its staff, and carried out 'one case, one discussion' and 'one person, one policy' strategies for high-level talents. More than 200 new talents were introduced to P University in 2021 in key disciplines, important frontier disciplines, and emerging interdisciplinary fields. In addition, as part of the university's commitment to developing young talents, senior teachers and leading talents were encouraged to provide guidance for the development of

young talents. In addition, a variety of activities, including young teacher training and academic seminars, were organised to assist young teachers in solving practical difficulties in teaching and academic development. Moreover, P University decided to give greater autonomy to team leaders, and provide long-term and stable funding.

③ Optimise talent evaluation. In all evaluations, teachers' ethics are prioritised, followed by teaching results, scientific research, and tutoring. P University has fully adopted this classification, and has constructed a system for evaluating different categories of talent based on different standards. In addition, P University has continuously optimised its tenure-track system in order to fully utilise its guiding and motivating role. The performance and potential of candidates are thoroughly assessed through specialist reviews.

④ Integrate superior resources and guarantee talents service. P University is committed to providing talent development support in a variety of ways, including housing, medical care, and educational services for children.

Policy to practice

As a primary strategy in the 1990s, P University focused on developing outstanding students. This approach was based on the understanding that teachers' level and quality affected the university's progress and development, and thus affected the university's ability to innovate and provide high-quality. At that time, P University was in need of a means of re-evaluating personnel, even if this involved weeding out less effective teachers. Traditionally, teachers in Chinese universities previously had lifetime teaching tenure of teaching, framed as an identity called 'Bianzhi,' which meant they could remain in the same department for a lifetime if they wished to. At the time, this concept was referred to as the 'Iron Rice Bowl' (Xia *et al.*, 2020) in. As some university teachers' enthusiasm for scientific research was not high, P University was seeking to arouse it by improving its assessment standards and reward mechanisms.

In 2003, some Chinese university began to break the 'Bianzhi' system. It was believed at the time that the tenure system of American the most effective institutional arrangement for identifying and motivating talents in universities and maintaining a vital atmosphere on campus (e.g., Liu Hong, 2020; Liu et al., 2021; etc.). P University was inspired by the American tenure system in to adopt a competitive employment system and classified management.

The tenure system, in its Chinese system, works according to the following principles:

①Classification of talents.

Teachers were classified into three categories at P University in 2007, namely teaching-oriented, scientific research-oriented, and teaching & research, among which teaching & research was considered the core of the tenure-track system. One of the staff members of the HR department of P University said: *" Management by category helps to define the types of talents clearly, so as to concentrate resources on talents with the greatest potential."*

This staff member considered the classification of teachers beneficial to the concentration and integration of resources. It is true that some professors have exceptional research skills and have an excellent reputation in academia, but do not place much emphasis on teaching, and some faculty members may have less than satisfactory scientific research results, but deliver well-received lectures. The classification system ensures that all talent has an equal opportunity to compete and develop.

Furthermore, in order to improve the enthusiasm of each school, the method of 'respecting schools' was adopted. According to this approach, schools could formulate their own department-specific reform based on the particular characteristics of their disciplines. Their plans are submitted to the president's office, and a meeting is arranged for discussion and approved before implementation.

In 2013, the classified management was essentially completed at P University, which constituted sufficient institutional preparations for the reform of tenure-track system.

② Implementation of tenure-track system.

Since 2014, in order to attract and develop first-class talents, the tenure-track system has been established, and P University has become one of the earliest universities to implement this system. Six departments were selected as pilots. In terms of position setting, the system includes tenure track posts (including special researchers and special associate researchers) and tenure posts (including professors, associate professors, chair professors, and distinguished professors). Tenure track is the preparatory stage for teachers who have the potential to obtain tenure. Tenure track talents, who fail to be promoted to tenure posts at

the end of their employment period (the assessment period is generally 6 years), must leave and seek employment elsewhere. For talents who have already achieved tenure posts, P University also puts forward corresponding academic tasks and requirements with a period of 3-6 years to encourage talents to maintain their academic efforts. This approach is also known as the 'up or out' system, and Figure 5.2 shows its operational mechanisms. The assessment of the talent from tenure-track positions to associate professorships is the most crucial part of the process. In terms of evaluation, research, teaching and service contributions are prioritised. Candidates' evaluation materials are collected and submitted to an academic committee led by the dean. Tenure reviews often include outside experts who evaluate the candidate's academic contributions and make recommendations on whether to grant tenure. The college then submits the evaluation report to the University and the final decision is made. Kahn & Huberman (1988) note that a 'up or out' system stipulates that employees lose their jobs if they are not promoted within the given timeframe; on the other hand, the higher salary that employees receive after promotion must be explicitly agreed upon in the contract, to encourage the employees to work harder. Therefore, identifying talent, motivating talents which have been identified, and securing their continued employment are all functions of the 'up or out' system.
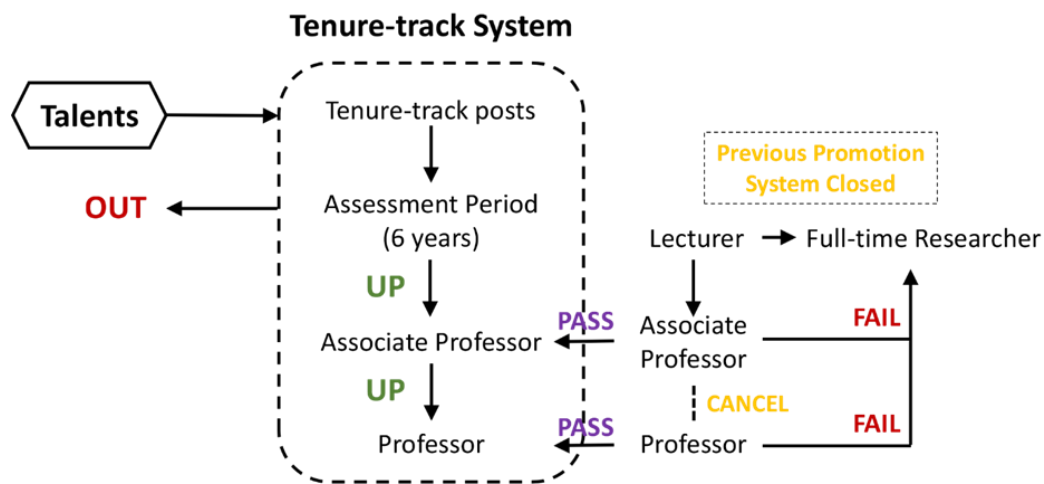
Figure 5.2 Tenure-track System of P University

When the previous promotion channels of existing talents were closed down suddenly, the existing talents were very defensive, and this created an obstacle to reform. The shutting down of previous promotion channels not only failed to motivate the existing teachers, but

also increased their stress.

Question: What about the existing talents in the previous system?

Answer: Professors need to reapply for tenure.

Questions: What do they think about that?

Answer: They feel they have gained nothing, in psychological terms, and are under great stress of 'up or out' and anxiety of salary reduction; because if they didn't get a tenure post before 2018, they could no longer apply for a professor. In fact, there are still a certain number of associate professors in the traditional system. The university stipulates that associate professors should apply for professorship in tenure-track system, otherwise they might need to transfer to 'full-time scientific research' positions, which means half their future salary needs to be decided by research outcomes, and this is full of uncertainty.

Question: What is the probability of success in applying for an associate professor or professor in tenure-track system?

Answer: Probably less than 50%. Generally, newly recruited overseas talents are more likely to meet the evaluation requirements of tenured professors; because some existing teachers have no overseas platform and cooperative vision, they always lose in competition.

Evidently, due to the reform of the tenure-track system, some talents in the original system have not been promoted for many years, and the pressure brought by closing the original promotion system by 2018 has further deepened the problem. Overall, P University combines the pre-existing conventional system with the new tenure-track system, which leaves existing talents facing the dilemma of salary reduction, resulting in anxiety. This consequence is, of course, quite different from the one originally intended, namely motivating talents.

In order to solve these challenges, P University decided to run a double-track system in which the new tenure-track system and the previous promotion system were combined. This was achieved in the following way:

First, the traditional promotion system is not be closed. Lecturers can be promoted to full-time researchers, associate professors, and professors. Talents in the traditional system

are given the opportunity to apply for tenure after being named professors.

Second, in terms of promotion to professional titles related to scientific research, teachers can also apply for tenure after being promoted from associate researchers to full-time researchers.

Third, new talents recruited by the new system are evaluated in full accordance with the requirements and standards of the tenure-track system.
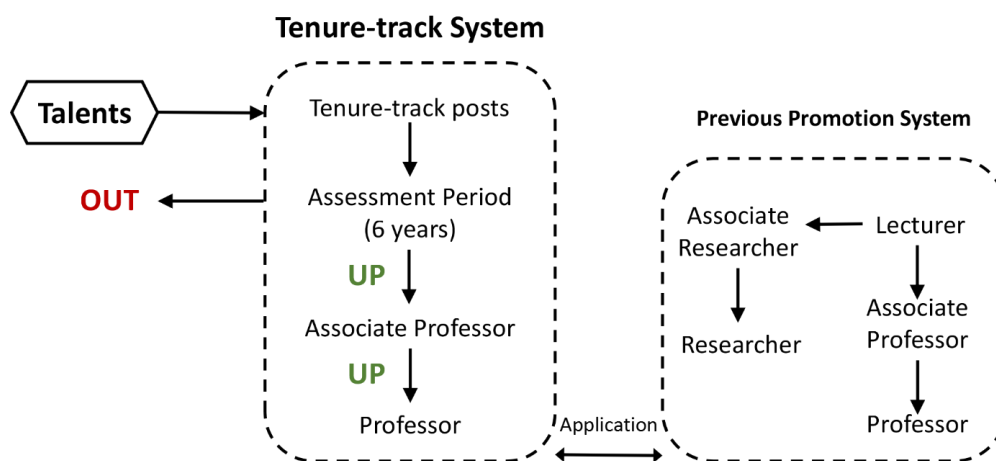
Figure 5.3 Modified Tenure-track System of P University

The leadership of P University believes that *"whether the new system can be generally accepted by all relevant stakeholders, and even become the consensus or shared values of everyone to some extent, is key to the successful implementation of the system."* The main stakeholders include leaders, newly recruited talents and teachers working within the original system. An interviewee of the academic assessment committee stated: *"Because the university strictly implements the tenure-track system, newly recruited talents have not been mixed in the academic assessment of the existing groups, ensuring that the assessment and promotion is not chaotic."*

For new talents, P University has specially set up a talent fund of 50 million yuan, which gives new talents high salaries. P University treated new talents with a new budget, and did not use the salary of the traditional system to subsidise the tenure-track system, thus effectively safeguarding the interests of the existing talents and reducing their resistance to reform. In addition, there is a significant difference in salary between the two systems used by P

University, which guarantees the interests of new talents. The leader of the HR department mentioned that the salary of talents in the tenure-track system is quite attractive, and, more specifically, that the annual salary of tenured professors is about 400,000 yuan, the salary of associate professors is about 320,000 yuan, and the salary of special researchers is about 250,000 yuan. P University thereby maintains its interests at a systematic level, and financial system is sustainable and supports the interests of relevant groups.

For the existing talents, the salary offered in support of the conventional promotion system is increasing, which inevitably increases motivation. Benefiting from the support of the national and local governments and the development of the university's financial resources, P University has increased the annual salary of professors in nontenure-track system from 150,000 yuan to 200,000 yuan, and the annual salary of associate professors from 100,000-120,000 yuan to 150,000-160,000 yuan.

In addition, the university advocates talents in both systems to ensure a healthy degree of competition, and has launched 'X Plan' which is designed to provide older professors with the opportunity to improve their incomes. Plan X divides talents into three categories, A, B and C. A subsidy of 200,000 yuan is provided for Class A, a subsidy of 150,000 yuan is provided for Class B and a subsidy 100,000 yuan is provided for Class C, accounting for about 40% of annual income.

N University

Different with P University, N University's mission is to serve regional needs, in terms of economic and social development, and to connect the local industries and the university's academic strengths. By 2025, the leadership of N University plans to have established a first-class university with distinctive regional characteristics and outstanding ability to serve its region. Their two main development approaches are, firstly, undergraduate education that emphasises moral pedagogy, and, secondly, joint development with the regional government that emphasises the national 'double first-class' concept. Their strategic goals are very specific, as can be seen in Table 5.3. The information is taken from the development plan published by N University in 2020.

Table 5.3 Strategy and TM of N University

Timeline	Aim	Strategic objectives	TM strategy	TM strategic objectives	Key points of current TM
By 2025	Among the top 25 universities in the western region and the top 200 in the country.	Develop 8-10 disciplines in the top 50% of the national rankings.	Strengthening the university with talents	Strengthen the attraction and introduction of high-level talents and teams; Establish a new performance evaluation and resource allocation mechanism.	① Attract and introduce talent based on demand. ② Emphasis on talent development. ③ Motivate talent with performance management. ④ Retain talent by emphasizing talent service
By 2035	Achieve a ranking in the top 20 universities in the western region and in the top 100 universities in the country.	Develop a more mature and standardised undergraduate education system, with 3-4 disciplines gaining their own national first-class status and gaining international influence;		Over 50% of teachers have overseas study and research experience, and 200 high-level talents will be recruited.	

TM Policy Orientation

① Attract and introduce talent based on demand. By considering its actual needs in terms of teaching and research, discipline development, and talent pool building, N University seeks and recruits scholars with potential, influential academic leaders, and innovative teams. It is the Party committee's responsibility to plan overall talent attraction and introduction. HR is responsible for specific recruitment matters, and each department actively contributes to talent identification. Furthermore, N University is exploring more flexible ways to attract global talents, such as an agreed salary structure.

② Emphasis on talent development. To create a talent pool, it is important not only to introduce external talents, but also to strengthen the development of internal talents. N University focuses on supporting and developing excellent teachers who are expected to achieve inclusion in national programs, teaching outcomes, and national talent titles. N

University supported introducing new Ph.Ds for scientific research, encouraged young teachers to obtain higher academic qualifications internally, and provided financial support. Moreover, it seeks to build an exceptional, exchange and development platform for talents through teacher training, project collaborations, and teacher exchange within partner institutions.

③ Motivate talent with performance management. Teachers' ethics should be regarded as the primary standard of talent identification and evaluation, and a data-driven, reasonable and efficient classified management system and performance assessment system should be established. This enables different types of talents, in the categories of teaching, scientific research and administration, can maximise their effectiveness in the most appropriate direction. Performance-contribution oriented talent evaluation emphasises representative works' quality and academic impact. Teachers are considered to be motivated to achieve excellence in teaching and scientific research when they are evaluated on their performance. Furthermore, a certain number of special talent positions and performance targets have been established to encourage talent to develop their careers to the greatest extent possible

④ Retain talent by emphasising talent service. Maintain a people-oriented service approach to increase talent retention. University N actively creates an atmosphere of respect, care, support and service for talents, and provide holistic support in terms of housing, children's school enrollment, government living subsidies, etc.

Policy to practice: Particular TM Practices

After the implementation of the national 'double first-class' policy, N University introduced performance management of talents in relation to categories. According to this approach, talents were classified into three categories, namely, research-oriented, teaching-oriented and research & teaching. Talents are then identified and developed based on the different characteristics of each category.

① A performance points system: 'Gongfen' system

N University combined the strategic goals of the university with the professional development goals of teachers, formulated talent development plans and performance objectives, and

regularly evaluated various factors affecting the quality of teaching, scientific research and social services in relation to individual teacher development plans. On this basis, given university provides performance evaluation feedback to talents, and encourages teachers to continuously improve their professional skills and performance. The university believes that this is a powerful tool for guiding talents and promoting the continuous improvement of teaching and scientific research.

A points system called 'Gongfen' (in Chinese) was used by the university to calculate the research productivity. A clear evaluation system is used to determine the value, in terms of points, of papers (of different types), patents, awards, consulting reports, programmes, etc. Workload points are converted into pay at the end of the year, as a performance bonus. The more papers published, the higher the reward, which creates a culture of publishing. As a result, talents, regardless of their classification, aim to publish as many papers as possible. Additionally, talent promotion usually requires them to have papers published, regardless of their category.

The university recognises that this is a joint force for its development, and its success also depends on this upward momentum. Therefore, publishing papers has become the most important and direct goal for N University, especially publishing in high-quality journals.

The teachers of N University generally expressed negative emotions about this approach, but followed it nonetheless. As a result of this system, teachers place a high priority on scientific research but rarely prioritise teaching. In order to realise rapid promotion and performance rewards, they focus on research that produces results rapidly. By publishing at times highly repetitive papers, a considerable number of publications can be accumulated in a short time, but this does not necessarily reflect academic achievements of significant influence.

N University has successfully implemented performance-based management, including summative evaluation of previous projects; however, it has failed to provide timely and comprehensive feedback to teachers, and to build talent development plans based on feedback.

② Academic qualifications promotion plan

The academic qualification promotion plan is a talent development program that encourages young teachers to pursue doctoral degrees, take positions as visiting scholars, or apply for postdoctoral positions.

In order to develop and broaden the academic horizons of young talents, N University has issued a policy of sending young teachers to renowned universities or research institutes to pursue higher degrees, further education or training programs. N University has especially encouraged overseas study experience, as a way to improve young teachers' academic abilities and develop academic contacts globally. As N University does not have a post-doctoral studies centre, and not all disciplines have the right to award doctoral degrees, in some cases teachers cannot receive their doctoral training on campus. A number of supports are provided by N University for teachers undertaking training, especially for those studying for doctorates. A return to school agreement is required in order to retain talents, and if they fail to return as scheduled, they are required to pay a large fee. However, it has also been questioned, as a review of the interview results indicates.

For example, some teachers choose to study for a doctorate in Southeast Asia. Such doctoral degrees are typically easier to graduate from and more financially viable. Due to fierce competition in Chinese universities and many prospective PhD students' academic level and economic situation, Southeast Asia doctoral programmes are now regarded as 'inevitable' choices. From their point of view, *"Although my academic ability is not sufficient for taking up position at a first-class university, I don't want to give up. I still want to move forward, access a higher level of research programmes, be promoted to associate professor, or change jobs to a better university."*

N University encourages teachers to apply for a Ph.D. to improve their academic qualifications. Teachers also have a strong desire and motivation. On the one hand, N University's new professional promotion policy stipulates that teachers under the age of 45 must have a doctoral degree in order to receive a promotion. A degree can also directly affect the salary: the monthly allowance increases by 5,000 yuan. In addition, overseas students can complete their studies by taking online courses without needing to travel abroad, which undoubtedly provides an ideal choice for in-service university teachers.

Although many South-East Asian doctoral programmes are considered to have low value, N

University approaches the matter positively because the percentage of teachers with Ph.Ds is an important assessment metric in higher education. The Ministry of Education stipulates that universities can apply to become master's degree-granting institutions only if the number of teachers who hold doctoral degrees is not lower than 25%. When universities apply to become doctoral degree awarding institutions, a minimum of 45% is required. Additionally, this is related to university resource allocation; in order to improve their ranking, universities need to increase the number of Ph.D.s, and this also increases their access to government resources. This will also result in an improvement in the quality of students

5.4.2 Organisational Culture and TM

P University

In 1907, P University was founded as a medical institution and has since grown into a comprehensive university. Throughout its history, P University has maintained a profound and unique cultural heritage and spiritual character, and has received recognition for its diligent and focused development. Rationality and pragmatism have characterised the university's development throughout its history.

The most popular slogan of P University, 'Walk with our motherland and help the world through science and technology', has become the core of its campus culture, and is reflected in the words and deeds of its teachers and students, as it captures their attitude, motivation and working style. The culture of the university can be characterised more specifically according to the following concepts:

First, profession-based patriotism. P University's culture emphasises patriotism, and the university's employees believe that patriotism and social responsibility should be derived from practice.

Second, scientific thinking and precise reasoning. At P University, rigor and pragmatism are valued, and most disciplines have a focus on urban development. As a result, there is a particular emphasis on creative engineering, and the attempt to realise development in an innovative way under the guidance of general theories.

Third, continuous innovation and striving for excellence. Setting tough but attainable goals,

constantly raising the bar in pursuit of excellence, and responding to the need for achievement are key values of P University.

N University

N University advocates a spirit of 'Shazaoshu'. Shazaoshu, also known as elaeagnus angustifolia, silver berry or wild olive, native to western China, is one of the most distinctive plants in the region of N University. This is a kind of desert plant characterised by tenacious vitality, and is an important tree species of the northwest region, widely used to create shelter forests in farmlands and for greening agricultural land. As a result of its exceptional ability to resist drought, sand, salt and high soil alkali concentrations, it can take root wherever it is, regardless of the external environment. This spirit is interpreted by N University as: not afraid of difficulties, not afraid of the wind and cold, has deep roots, will grow and thrive. According to their vision, the university will be rooted in the West, and will over value to the West, just as the local Shazoashu does. More specifically, the university's values can be characterised as follows:

First, the university emphasises the importance of dedication, hoping that their students and their teachers will be like Shazaoshu, firmly rooted in the university and able to grow. Talents could remain in the Western China, depending on different factors; they should dedicate themselves to the place where they are most needed.

Second, the universities emphasise being fearless in relation to difficulties. Because of the limited resources of western universities, talent should be encouraged to overcome difficulties and learn to develop through struggle, just as the Shazaoshu grows in places without fertile soils and abundant rain, and thereby prove their tenacity and strength of character.

Additionally, the university emphasises the contribution of the talents. Just as the Shazaoshu serves as a shelterbelt to protect the land and produce sweet fruits, their scientific research can strongly contribute to the success of the university and the development of the local economy.

5.5 Research Question Four: Issues of TM in Case Universities

It is evident that TM is evolving in academic settings in China, but scholars have raised concerns about its implementation. For instance, Zhang (2013) cast doubts on the effectiveness of TM in the university system to ensure the survival of the most qualified talent. Zhang (2015) also pointed out several issues in the implementation of the 'up or go' system in Chinese universities, including the processing of academic achievements for short-term financial gains. In the interview, this study also listened to many concerns voiced by the respondents.

(1) Concerns about overly quantitative evaluation.

"Performance policies tend to evaluate us in a highly quantitative manner, focusing more on numbers and metrics while neglecting the essence of education. It is challenging to measure teaching quality solely with numbers, and such policies may overlook individual differences in the teaching process and actual academic contributions." (Uni.N-TP-IT-05)

A respondent from N University expressed concerns about the overly quantitative nature of evaluations and believed that certain performance policies may lead teachers to overly prioritize evaluation and performance, neglecting interactions and relationships with students. This could affect students' experiences of teaching, thereby influencing teaching effectiveness.

Under the excessively incentivized performance system, talents at N University exhibit limited rationality and opportunistic tendencies.

"Some performance policies may be too directive, forcing teachers to pursue research directions aligned with policy goals, thus undermining the importance of academic freedom. We hope for more space to pursue personal academic interests and in-depth research." (Uni.P-TP-RL-16)

P University employs an 'up-or-out' deterrent that provides more motivation, but does not contribute significantly to the creation of a positive organisational culture, or the maintenance of academic freedom. This finding is in line with the conclusions of van den Brink et al.(2013). In a study of universities in the Netherlands, these researchers identified three key dilemmas, namely transparency versus autonomy, the power of HR versus power of academics, and

equality versus homogeneity.

Researchers are rarely able to study the scientific problems they are most passionately interested in, and are prevented from working in accordance with their preferred rhythm. Furthermore, based on this study of P University, it is clear that teachers choose topics which are highly popular and have a preference for results that support mainstream paradigms as this increases their chances of publication. However, this approach discourges researches from pursuing niche research questions and methodologies, leading to a more homogenous research environment. According to Tian & Lu (2017), this is the cost developing Chinese universities into world-class institutions. Tian & Lu emphasise the insecurity, uncertainty, and anxiety university talent experiences due to their responsibilities, and note that the rigid tenure requirements contributed to low quality of research and low effort teaching.

Moreover, this approach to performance management fails to take into account the academic career development of teachers in different age groups. Its impetuous work orientation and stringent academic focus place young teachers under intense pressure to demonstrate academic endurance and belief, which is not conducive to their healthy academic development. Some studies have argued that this system of performance evaluation has led to stagflation (Bruno and Sachs, 2013) in the development of scientific research. In the context of this study, this means that although N University has been investing more in scientific research, and its criteria for measuring talent performance have improved over time, its scientific contributions have remained stagnant or even slowed down. From the perspective of agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989a), members of an organisation have a tendency to reduce the cost of their own efforts while maximising the benefits they can obtain from the performance management system. Research regarding Finnish universities (Kivistö, Pekkola and Lyytinen, 2017), has shown that under a performance management mechanism that is overly focused on rewards and punishments, and, more broadly, is outcome-oriented, the intrinsic motivation of teachers in knowledge-intensive work will be reduced. By providing excessive incentives, a great deal of low-quality work has been generated, resulting in wasted organisational resources and undermining the original intention to develop universities through TM.

In the case of P University, originally, the tenure-track system was intended to motivate talent

and identify outstanding potential faculty members. However, in practice, it is used as a performance management tool to promote academic productivity which is a deviation from policy. The administrators and talents themselves have firmly linked the system with performance management, focusing on stimulating teachers' scientific research performance. With this emphasis, they have ignored its deeper value, which includes attracting, retaining and developing talent.

(2) Strong opposition among faculties

There is significant opposition among teachers at P University to the 'up or out' system, and a similar sentiment is observed towards the Gongfen system in N University. For example, some expressed the unfairness in evaluation standards: *"the standards fail to fully consider the diverse requirements of different disciplines and teaching styles, resulting in unjust evaluations"*. Some felt that insufficient recognition for teaching, and they believe *"this emphasis may lead teachers to prioritize publishing papers over providing thoughtful education to students."*

In addition, employment extension and professional promotion increasingly depend on whether the number and rank of publications meet the terms of teachers' employment contracts. The great pressure resulting from the 'publish or out' policy has negatively impacted the research work of talents in a number of respects. Si (2022) described how high-intensity work and tenure-track systems lead to great mental stress and insecurity for young academics in his survey of five Chinese universities. To meet the criteria of their quantitative working performance evaluation, teachers must pursue short-term research outcomes and immediate benefits within the limited contract period. Tian et al. (2016) reflected upon publish-or-perish culture in Chinese universities. They concluded that, as a result of this culture, researchers often do not have sufficient time to explore their long-term research interests, and struggle to formulate long-term research objectives.

Moreover, N University typically receives a large number of complaints about the performance points system when revising its professional promotion and performance appraisal policies. Those complaining believe that the system cannot measure all aspects of a teacher's work, and especially fails to take into account the quality of scientific research. Many of the teachers at N University who expect to be promoted choose to concentrate their time and energy on

activities that can receive strong results in terms of evaluation, or which generate economic benefits, and show extreme reluctance to participate in teaching, tutoring and other service work. On the other hand, teachers who have already been promoted to professorships seem untouched by these debates. Some studies suggest that the current performance evaluation system of China does not encourage teachers to engage in high-quality academic work (e.g., Zhou, 2009; Meng, 2021; Tan et al., 2021; etc). Other scholars have drafted some initial ideas in reference to how the ecology of academia can be restored for talents. Long (2022), for example, demanded a return to the logic of academic-based appraisal, by limiting the extent of quantitative evaluation. In addition, Li (2021) explored academic and talent-sharing mechanisms. Moreover, Chen (2021) analysed the issue from the perspective of the relatively stable and explicable cultural relations formed in the academic field, comprised of scholars, scholarships and cultural environments. In this context, he suggested slowing down and emphasising quality over quantity.

(3) Concerns on incomplete system

This study found that there are many imperfections in the institutional reforms of the two case universities, for example, P University lacks an appropriate exit mechanism and supportive policies, such as pensions and unemployment insurance, due to its 'up or out' system, which places teachers at risk of unemployment. Furthermore, teachers who are unemployed are often labeled as 'unqualified', 'poor performers', or 'people who have been fired,' and are often questioned by employers when they attempt to return to employment. The 'up-or-out' system provoked discomfort and resistance among teachers following its implementation. Mallapaty (2021) description of a murder at a Chinese university highlights the risks of tensions over the 'up or out' tenure system. Although such an extreme case has not occurred at P University, similar incidents in Chinese universities have caused P University to reflect on and improve its exit procedure.

Furthermore, there is a bias in the implementation of talent retention. Teachers' salaries have been increased by P University as part of its tenure-track system to ease negative emotions and unemployment risks. This approach follows a managerialist logic: the new system implemented at P University raised expected salaries, in the hope that employees, as a result, would concentrate on their work without any worries and complaints. Correlatively, if

teachers fail to produce academic output this is perceived as resulting entirely from their lack of diligence or ability. In this context, it seems 'illegal' for young teachers to express their negative emotions. Huang & Fan (2015) argued that the impact of the results-oriented academic culture that emphasised performance appraisal under the new system was hard to detect, but should not be ignored. Its main effect, according to Huang & Fan, was the promotion of a utilitarian moral view which surresses subjects' feelings and promotes external evaluation. Focusing on talent retention is key to addressing this issue.

N University falls short in fulfilling talent attraction commitments, especially regarding unclear policies at the high-level talent level, including issues like introduction procedures, treatment, matching services, etc. Although N University is eager to attract talent, it has failed to attract high-level talent or teams. Introducing talents to the western region is a long-term project, which will require consistent work over a long period of timeAlthough the salaries ofer are intended to attract talents, they are, in reality. less competitive in terms of salary and other benefits than competing institutions in the eastern region. Most talent introduction policies formulated by universities are based on university needs rather than the perspective of talent. Other rights and interests besides scientific research tasks are not mentioned, which makes it challenging to manage the evaluation of the knowledge value of talents and guarantee their benefits.

(4) Lack of decision-making power

University talents' participation in academic management is not only considered a way for talents to serve the university, but is also their right as members of the university (Kennedy, 1997). However, standardisation and bureaucratic management have become determining features of modern Chinese universities. Under the background of national enforcement policy and the rhetoric of officiality, the generalisation of administrative power limits teachers' participation in university management. Among talents, professors and associate professors have more opportunities to participate in academic management than young people because of their academic status and influence; but only professors in leading positions have independent interests and the right to express themselves freely. The weak position of talents has also been confirmed by the interviewees, who expressed their strong dissatisfaction with the existing management system, which has affected their enthusiasm and creativity. In

addition, it has led to talents viewing themselves as 'outsiders', and weakened their sense of ownership and loyalty to the university.

Interviewee: "I'm an 'invisible man' at the college, and I just follow the decisions of the college, and sometimes I don't know what's going on, but it's okay, you know."

Question: "Did the college discuss with teachers and ask for their opinions before making a decision?"

Answer: "Yes, but it is not my place to discuss. If the leaders have any ideas, they will hold conferences with several heads of disciplines, namely the academic committee, to discuss them. In our academic committee, there are 4 college leaders, 3 department heads, and 3 respected, older professors. For example, every time our performance allocation plan is proposed by leadership directly, each department calls everyone together for a meeting to discuss and collect feedbacks. The plan has many unfavorable aspects to teachers without executive position, and we have a great many opinions. But these opinions are rarely voiced. Because it is formulated by the leadership, and it is certainly beneficial to them, teachers without any executive position can only listen and obey."

Question: "Why weren't your opinions taken on board?"

Answer: "Leaders have their own considerations and they want us to take the whole situation into consideration, but it always comes at the expense of our interests.

Some teachers have more courage to put forward opinions during public sessions, and they are regarded as troublemakers by the leaders as a result. When there are good opportunities, they will be marginalised, so it is better not to express objections and to keep a low profile like me."

Question: "Are there any channels through which you can offer opinions and ideas in the university?"

Answer: "In college, this is the case. In the university, every year, we have a teachers' Congress. People who are highly valued by the leadership, people who follow the leadership firmly and people who are always 'nice guys' or smooth operators and never speak out are chosen to participate. Our university regularly organises the principal reception day for students to listen to their opinions and feedbacks, but for us? Never."

(Uni.N-TP-TT-10)

In the interview, many teachers talked about the impact of the management system on them and their helplessness in relation to the system:

"I feel that many policies and rules are aimed at teachers now, and individuals are unable to make changes. It is best to follow the flow, but I often can't find the rhythm." (Uni.N-TP-HE-24)

University talents need an official channel through which their views can be heard. Currently, the 'aphasia' in the management system makes them feel marginalised, casting a shadow on important decisions talents must make concerning their development, interests and well-being. As a result, many talents have come to accept the helplessness of their position, and their lack of a right to speak silently, take their position of 'no influence' for granted, and comfort themselves with the knowledge that despite these challenges, they will slowly climb the academic 'pyramid'."

(5) Significant policy homogenization

The content of talent attraction policies is similar to that of other universities and fails to highlight the university's unique regional characteristics. Specifically, N University's regulations on academic ability, academic background, age of employment, and level type of talent are similar to the content of talent introduction policies of P University. However, N University and P University are distinct in terms of rankings and development direction. Huang & Ding (2022) argue that as a result of the homogenisation of western universities' talent introduction policies, regional economic development will be affected negatively, primarily due to the absence of demands which reflect regional characteristics, which, in turn, make it difficult, in practice, to satisfy regional development needs. Many researches emphasised this point. Krishnan & Scullion (2017), for example, found that TM differs in SMEs due to structural and institutional differences, and Pandey et al. (2022) found that TM differs across organisations which differ terms of in structure and function.

5.6 Conclusion

To answer the first research question, "What is the role of talent management in Chinese

universities?", this study thoroughly reviewed the findings of this research which revealed a number of interesting insights about how TM is perceived in Chinese universities. As shown by the interview data, key employees, high potential employees, and high performers seem synonymous with talent. Talent also encompasses some distinctive characteristics, such as 'political correctness' and 'fine moral and ethical'. Notably, Chinese universities emphasise certain knowledge and skills as well as creative work when defining talent.

This chapter then presented the findings of TM practices in Chinese universities with regard to talent identification, attraction, retention, and development. From policy to practice, this study discussed more possibilities for the development of TM in Chinese universities and offered some suggestions for improvement. However, this study not only examined TM practices in Chinese universities from an organisational perspective, but also highlights findings from the talents' perspective, in relation to their current status, development needs, and behavioural strategies, to provide a comprehensive picture of TM in Chinese universities.

Furthermore, to provide a clearer comparison of the different TM strategies adopted by the two universities, taking into account their own positioning, strategy, and culture, this study compared the two universities' implementation of TM, including the particular role of TM and the challenges it has created. This helps to provide a more comprehensive answer to the research question of this paper, specifically, in terms of the fit between TM and strategy, the contributions of TM, and the main challenges of implementing TM.

P University, located in the economically developed eastern region of China, is a well-known university with a high ranking. Its goal is to enter the forefront of world-class universities. Its TM serves both its own strategic needs and the national TM strategy, Strengthening the Nation with Talent. At its cultural core, it is characterised by profession-based patriotism, scientific thinking and precise reasoning, as well as innovation. In practice, P University adopts a classified management of talents approach, and has departed from the traditional employment relationship of Chinese universities by leading the implementation of the tenure-track system. This study focused on presenting the process of TM implementation holistically, giving particular emphasis to the issues that arise during the coupling of the old and new systems. This study believes that P University's TM approach has contributed to value creation, improved talent performance, promoted talent mobility, and successfully circumvented the

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bureaucratic and guanxi-driven administrative management typical in Chinese universities. However, P University's TM still faces many challenges, on account of its deviation from the original intention of incentives in the process of improving performance, its lack of exit mechanisms, and its 'up or out' policy that puts great pressure on talents and generates negative emotions towards the university's TM. Moreover, it is still necessary to address biases in how talent retention is conceptualised.

N University, located in the underdeveloped western region of China, seeks to serve regional economic and educational needs. It has continuously worked to attract talents in response to its low ranking and a long-term talent shortage. Its strategic goal is to rank rankamong the top 20 universities in the western region and among the top 100 universities in the country. Its TM strategy is a decomposition of the university development strategy objectives. Unfortunately, in order to get a higher ranking, the leadership of N University failed to take into account the university's history as a teaching-oriented institution and prioritized research. In order to retain talented students, the university culture emphasises the spirit of 'Shazaoshu', which focuses on dedication and generosity of spirit. In the practice of TM, classified management of talents is also used, as well as a unique performance points system. The points system was designed to motivate talents, allocate resources more equitably, and formulate talent development plans based on their performance. The implementation of TM has led to the expansion of the talent pool, an increase in the desire of talents to engage in research, and an increase in the quantity of research. It has also provided opportunities for teachers in a relatively disadvantaged position to receive academic training and continue their education, and rationalised talent identification and evaluation, eliminating the influence of guanxi. However, N University's approach to talent attraction lacks competitiveness and distinctive regional features, and homogenisation is evident. Additionally, the performance points system has lowered professional dignity and devalued talents, leading to frequent cases of resistance from talents towards the system. In practice, teachers are treated as an undifferentiated labour force, and the relationship between teachers and the university becomes one of value exchange, in which the university provides teachers with performance-based compensation of equivalent value for their work. In other words, N University mistook a model of performance-based pay for genuine motivation. This pragmatic model fails to promote talent development, and fails to provide teachers with practical feedback which could lead to

improvement. Moreover, insufficient care and support is provided to teachers. In addition, the TM strategy at N University has led to excessive incentives, which arguably has caused stagflation.

The last section of this chapter, focusing on several concerns on TM in case universities and discusses the major challenges in implementing TM in Chinese universities.

Chapter 6 Discussion

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5, this study presented empirical findings centered around the research questions. In this chapter, this study further summarizes the main discoveries of this study and discuss these research findings by drawing on conclusions from key literature. To highlight the significant differences and similarities between the two case studies and between organisational and individual perspectives, this study conducted in-depth analyses and discussions on various themes for each university. Through these in-depth analyses and discussions, this chapter is to offer a comprehensive perspective, highlighting key features and trends in TM practices within Chinese universities. Theoretical insights with empirical findings are presented to provide a profound and thorough understanding and valuable insights for future research and practical applications. Specifically, the structure of this chapter includes the following sections: section 6.2 explored and compared the concepts of TM in the Chinese context with existing research. Section 6.3 focus on detailing how TM is executed in the specific context of Chinese universities, and specifically includes four aspects, talent identification, talent attraction, talent retention and talent development. Then, this chapter delved into the relationship between TM and strategy, as well as organisational culture, within the case universities (section 6.5), and then explored the role of TM in both case universities and conducted a comparative analysis, discussion and exploration of the reasons behind in Section 6.6.

6.2 Localization Concepts of TM in China

According to Ross (2013), there is no definitive definition of talent. Although Chinese universities also lack a single, unified definition of talent, the term is useful for discussing talent management; despite the lack of a perfect definition, it is generally agreed that talent comprises certain elements or qualities. Moreover, knowledge and skills, contributions, creativity, and leadership are also frequently used words in characterising talent. These high-frequency words confirmed the definitions suggested by Beechler & Woodward (2009), Čizmić & Ahmić (2021) and Thunnissen & Arensbergen (2015), etc. In addition, a key employee, a high potential employee, and a high performer seem to be synonymous with talent; this view

has been widely suggested, for example, by Reedy et al. (2012), Ansar (2018), and Nijs et al., (2014), etc. As a result, these words help to define the concept of talent., and in alignment with RBV, this study explores how the distinctive talents and skills of individuals contribute to the organization's capability to attain its strategic objectives.

However, this study offers some new findings In Chinese universities, 'political correctness' and 'exemplary morality' have emerged in attempts to refine the definition of talent in this unique context. This strongly affirms the important role of context (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). As Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2020) pointed out, the influence of organisational context has been underestimated in research on TM; as context determines how TM occurs, is understood, and is implemented, this is a significant problem. First of all, in the definition of talent in Chinese universities, the centrality of the concept 'political correctness' demonstrates that political factors are important; as has been shown, Chinese TM is, first and foremost, under the direction of the Party leadership and will serve national interests. Second, exemplary morality' reflects culture, and Chinese culture, historically, has always placed a high value on virtue. However, when this study examined the literature on talent in the Chinese context, these two words were not clearly used in various definitions of talent. In my view, this is because these two terms are viewed as prerequisites for defining talent, rather than components of finalised definitions. This, this study would suggest, is a deficiency in talent research in the Chinese context.

Secondly, the inclusion of 'certain knowledge and skills' reflects the higher requirements for teachers' professionalism in universities, which are different from those in other industries. Both western scholars and Chinese scholars have stressed this point in the past. When conducting research on scientific talent, Simonton (2008) defined talent as intelligence, personality, and genetic endowment. This study does not consider intelligence or genetic endowment when defining talent, in contrast to his views.

Third, across different identities, respondents emphasise that talents are those who make a distinctive contribution which reflects their value as talents. Other Chinese scholars have reached similar conclusions (e.g., Wang, 1983; Ye, 1983; etc.), and the research results of this study confirms and supports their research.

Finally, some scholars have incorporated the concept of creative work in the context of defining talent within a university setting. This entails not only acknowledging conventional academic accomplishments but also valuing the capability to generate innovative and original contributions (Arkko-Saukkonen, 2017). Talent identification is contingent upon an individual's aptitude for innovative thinking and original contributions to their respective field (Mumford, 1988). Notably, groundbreaking research, unique projects, or inventive solutions emerge as pivotal indicators of talent. Moreover, within a university environment, individuals demonstrating creative talents may excel in the integration of knowledge across diverse disciplines, promoting collaboration, and contributing to interdisciplinary projects that challenge conventional paradigms (Biancani et al., 2018). Furthermore, creative work is often correlated with robust problem-solving skills and critical thinking (Alatawi, 2016). Individuals showcasing the capacity to approach challenges with imaginative and inventive solutions garner recognition for their creative contributions. This acknowledgment may manifest through accolades, awards, or other forms of recognition, serving as clear indicators of talent within and beyond the university context.

The findings underscore the significance of talents, delineated by their exceptional skills and knowledge, as invaluable assets to the organization within the framework of Human Capital Theory (HCT). The reality is that Chinese university talent is defined by the papers individuals publish and the research programs they are responsible for. The terms 'political correctness' and exemplary morals are nebulous, difficult to measure and define, and need to be examined in detail. Tansley (2011) was correct to argue that when it comes to talents, people speak the same language, and in Chinese universities, it is ultimately about publication and research output. Published papers are the most intuitive measurement, and there is general consensus on the fairness of this approach. In order to solve the lack of consensus on agreed status of journals which makes this a challenging issue, Chinese universities generally adopt a unified catalog of journals from the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

TM in Chinese universities is largely determined by the Party leadership (Sun, 2022). This is manifested in a variety of talent policies. Through interviews, key resources related to TM are identified. These resources encompass the skills, knowledge, and expertise of employees, with a particular focus on those regarded as talents. Sun (2022) pointed out that talent policies issued by the party are designed to maximise the value of teachers' creativity, practice,

leadership in knowledge creation and dissemination, student education, and social service. In all talent policies issued by the government in Chinese universities in the last decade were reviewed, and highlighted the government's continuous role in promoting innovative talent policies. These policies respond to issues such as what kind of talent is suitable for becoming university teachers, researchers, and managers, how to select and motivate them, how to serve them, how to protect them, and how to develop them. Harvey (2014) analysed how talent policies in China are used to attract, retain, and manage talent, and concluded that attractive policies lead to success at the level of talent competition, and the present study highlighted the importance of the role of Chinese universities in promoting TM development through talent policy.

Firstly, through the analysis of existing talent policy, this study believes that the talent policy of Chinese universities has incorporated the ability of talents into the value system of TM, including teaching ability, academic ability, etc. It can be seen, therefore, that the talent policy is a context which favours the growth and progress of talents. Zhang et al. (2021) confirmed the function of government support for talent policy. Although his study focused on technology-based enterprises, the findings are relevant to Chinese universities as well. The talent policies in Chinese universities support talent identification, evaluation and talent development; regardless of its practical efficacy, these are good intentions.

In addition, currently, TM policies in Chinese universities provide comprehensive talent development (including survival development, teaching development, and academic development), and preferential treatment (including short-term and long-term incentives). Given its role in moral education and its greater political significance, Yu (2008) examined the revival of Confucianism in Chinese schools. Indeed, in terms of this moral philosophy, universities are responsible for the growth of talents. Therefore, universities have the responsibility to protect and develop university talents, and help teachers to fulfill their full potential as effective educators an approach which will enlarge the talent pool available for universities.

The findings elucidate how talents identified and nurtured through TM initiatives make positive contributions to the organization's goals and objectives. It substantiates a positive correlation between investments in human capital and organizational performance. Wen

(2019) proposed that Chinese universities provide an opportunity-rich context for the implementation of TM; first, the decentralisation of higher education management autonomy provides universities with opportunities to implement TM; second, the context of "double first-class" presents new opportunities for universities to obtain funds and resources to develop TM. As it is found in our study, case universities are taking advantage of these opportunities to implement TM.

6.3 TM Implementation within Chinese Context

6.3.1 Talent identification

Based on interviews with leadership, administrative staff and HR representatives of the case universities, this study reviewed the findings of talent identification in Chinese universities. In the following section, this study discuss how the picture of talent identification which emerges relates to its representation in the relevant literature.

Talent identification itself does not produce direct value; the actions the university takes based on its identification of talent is the real process of creating value. It is a process of clarifying and concretising information related to talents; this process provides some very clear information about whether the current talent pool fits the needs of the organisation (Calle-Duran, Fernandez-Alles and Valle-Cabrera, 2021).

There is a difference in how candidates are identified in academic subfields (van den Brink et al., 2012). Papers, professional titles and awards are all recognised within the recruitment framework of performance-ism, but such criteria are also gradually pushed to extremes in practice; for example, identification of talent based on papers is mainly based on the number of articles published, the reputation of the journals and citation data. This process underlines the triumph of the logic of performance-oriented managerialism, which results in institutions imitating the logic of the academic community (Levin, Kater and Wagoner, 2006). The performance-oriented approach pursues benefit maximisation and promotes extrinsic incentives, which helps to stimulate the enthusiasm of teachers in universities to a certain extent (Meyer & Evans, 2003). Moreover, clear quantitative criteria can limit unfairness (Murphy and Cleveland, 1995) and reduce the influence of administrative factors on talent identification. Peterson et al. (2022) argued that one of the factors affecting perceived

organisational justice is the lack of diversity in the talent identification process. This claim, that one-sided talent identification around research outcomes-papers in universities can not reflect the true potentials of talents, is supported by this study. A paper, in other words, can serve as an indicator of a teacher's ability to teach and conduct research, but it cannot be the only factor in talent identification. However, focusing on representative works of talent, simplicity and clarity is an approach which has won the favour of administrators in universities, partly as a reflection of the public's desire to understand academic talents intuitively. The representative work system is the result of interwoven factors, such as university teachers, HR departments, university leadership and public opinion. As this study argued with reference to the definition of university talent identification in Chapter 3, the collective action of individuals, organisations, and society defines the professional rights, responsibilities, and beliefs of university teachers (Achinstein, 2002). In this context, it is clear that TM of universities requires the cooperation of a wide range of stakeholders. In response to this, universities should establish a high-quality academic community to lead TM, provide a platform for academic communication, supervision and evaluation, gather and identify talents and their achievements, and establish a distinctive voice within the academic community.

To respect the research findings of Pankhurst & Collins (2013), it is imperative that key stakeholders maintain consistency in their understanding of the system and process of talent identification and development.

Different types of universities undertake different missions; therefore, universities should rationally identify the talents that they need instead of pursuing them blindly. University classification management was originally intended to identify different categories of talents and provide different development paths for them, but in practice, there has not been enough differentiation (Chang, 2020). Mousa et al., (2021), in their study of the Egyptian higher education sector, found that identifying and classifying talent is not based on the needs of departments. Given the correlation between Mousa et al.'s finding and the finding of this study, it can be concluded that talent identification and classification systems must consider motivational, structural, consequential, and social responsibility components. With this in mind, this study argues that universities should have accurate and clear strategic positioning, mission and development vision, and on this basis, uphold diversified and differentiated talent identification methods.

Moreover, talent identification is a specific action based on TM strategy; and from setting strategy to giving meaning to work, all university staff need to have a unified understanding of strategy. A study by Tyskbo (2021) examined the institutional logic of talent identification at headquarters and subsidiaries, and concluded that the way in which organisational actors identify talent is influenced by the logic they follow. Tyskbo also emphasised the importance of incorporating cultural norms, symbols, and practices into the identification process of talent at different institutional levels. The survey undertaken for this study demonstrated that the views of university leaders and specific school implementers were different, which was reflected in the confusion in HR about talents' roles in the workplace.

In summary,

- As a first step, talent identification should match an organisation's needs. An institution should have rational and clear strategic positioning, mission, and development vision, utilise diversified and differentiated talent identification methods, and communicate this to each actor.

- In universities, talent identification focuses primarily on papers and scientific research, and lacks a multi-category approach. Currently, classified talent identification is inseparable from teaching and scientific research output, and has not been successfully adapted to the development needs of different types of teachers.

- There should be an academic community leading TM at universities. This community should identify talents and achievements and establish a voice for the academic community.

6.3.2 Talent attraction

Among the factors influencing talent recruitment in Chinese universities are the reputation of the university, salary and benefits, academic and career development, fair promotion and evaluation, independent teaching and research, working environment, academic atmosphere, and the location of the university. Saurombe et al. (2017) identified six key themes for academic staff branding: reputation and image, organisational culture, identity, corporate social responsibility, and work environment. Comparative research results, from the

perspective of academic staff branding, have demonstrated the decisive role of reputation and work environment in recruitment. However, in the Chinese university context, potential employees place a particularly strong value the city where the university is located. It is for this reason that Hu et al. (2020) focused on regional talent attraction in relation to the key factors in China, and concluded that there are four specific aspects: regional development, industrial development, income, and regional environment.

This research found that talent recruitment poses several risks to universities. However, universities have not wavered in their desire for talent despite the risks in terms of cost and value. Sparrow (2019) introduced risk management thinking in talent planning. The risk of talent introduction refers to the loss or damage caused to the organisation by the behaviour of the introduced talents deviating from the expectations and objectives of the organisation. This study has objectively demonstrated some of risks of talent introduction. In the context of increasing talent competition, universities should analyse the possible risks to ensure that talent introductions are effective. Dahshan et al. (2018) confirmed the high cost of talent attraction, and Katz & Stark (1987) proposed the concept of asymmetric information. Additionally, this study found that there are also risks of cost and income imbalance, a mismatch between talents and positions, and risk in terms of talent flow. In addition, Wang (2017) argued that there are also risks of object selection of human capital investment, mainly moral hazard. Dang et al. (2020) mentioned, with reference to the compliance risk, for example, risks of infringement of the right to know, of breach of contract in employment contracts, and of infringing on the equal rights of existing talent. Universities and individuals both pose risks, and many factors contribute to these risks: the lack of cost-benefit analysis in the talent attraction process, mistakes in decision-making, etc.

According to my research, the primary issues with regard to talent attraction in Chinese universities are as follows:

First, lack of scientific planning. This pertains to the absence of systematic and strategic planning in the talent attraction process. HR Personnels expressed concerns about the mismatch between the skills of the talents recruited and the organisational needs, which can be attributed to inadequate planning, because leaders in certain academic departments first identify the talents they wish to attract, often those with prestigious doctoral backgrounds,

and then formulate plans accordingly, submitting applications to the HR department, rather than attracting talents based on professional or development needs.

Sun et al. (2006) proposed planning talent attraction around the characteristics, advantages, and practical needs of disciplines and schools in line with a given university's development strategy. Even though the case universities have adopted a similar approach, occasionally they deviate from their original plans and discuss individuals on a case-by-case basis. By chasing talents, they lose their rational focus on their development strategy, which results in vicious competition. Gardner (2002) described how talent raiding results in competitive interactions, and his suggestions regarding avoiding retaliation should be read widely in universities.

Second, the benefits generated by the introduction of talent are rarely considered, and the match between input and output is never taken into account. Participants who express concerns or provide feedback indicating a lack of consideration for the benefits and alignment between input and output would be considered as supporters of this point, involving teachers and faculty members. They emphasized the importance of aligning the talents brought in with the academic and research needs of the university, and concerned the resource wastage and guanxi influences, asserting that talent attraction does not yield tangible benefits or significant outcomes. Moreover, they argue that the costs incurred due to talent attraction impact and constrain their own interests. Ogbari (2018) addressed the relationship between inputs and outputs in terms of productivity. On this basis, this study argues that universities should try to break from conventional talent recruitment, and fully connect the input and output in the process. In addition, there is a certain difficulty in integrating newly introduced talents and existing talents in the absence of supporting measures after recruitment. As a result, talents may struggle to maximise their potential or stabilise their talents.

Third, talent is attracted by a particular and limited method, using a, narrow range of sources. An administer has proposed the idea of homogeneous talent recruitment, believing that adopting similar or identical methods and strategies in talent attraction leads to individuals with comparable backgrounds, skills, or experiences being brought in. This strategy may result in a lack of diversity in the organisational talent structure, limiting the emergence of different perspectives and innovation. The causes of this issue include: using identical recruitment channels; establishing similar recruitment criteria, emphasizing identical educational

backgrounds, skills, or work experience, thereby screening a relatively homogeneous pool of candidates; relying on a single source of talent (exclusively recruiting from specific talent pools or sources, such as relying solely on particular universities or corporate partners); emphasizing the idea that team members should possess similar backgrounds and experiences, potentially leading to the recruitment of homogeneous talents. Wang (2017) proposed that on the basis of fully mastering the available information, universities should broaden the channels of talent attraction and explore diversified means of attracting talent. The position of this study is that while solving the talent shortage in universities quickly is a key priority, the cost input should be reduced as far as possible to reduce the risk of brain drain.

6.3.3 Talent retention

In accordance with HCT, findings indicate that strategies for talent retention involve the provision of competitive compensation, opportunities for career development, and the cultivation of a positive work environment, all aimed at retaining valuable talents.

After an interview with leadership and administrators of case universities, it was found that brain drain is primarily caused by dissatisfaction with personal development, high job demands and pressure, and difficulty integrating into university culture and management. Thesefindings are consistent with the findings of a number of other studies. In a survey of 249 teachers in different universities, Abbabneh (2020) found that trust, commitment, and job satisfaction mediate the effects of met expectations on faculty retention intentions. YouYou (2014) found that the primary factor affecting mobility is job satisfaction through a quantitative study of 2613 questionnaires in China. Using semi-structured interviews with 123 faculty members, Ambrose et al. (2005) found that salary, promotion, and region primarily affect talent flow.

Universities have proposed a series of supporting policies to attract talents, and in the case of this study, universities also attract talents through providing jobs for spouses, high talent funds and research start-up funds, etc. However, universities struggle to implement their promises in a timely and comprehensive manner, which not only damages the university's reputation, but leads to brain drain. Zhao (2021) conducted an in-depth analysis of this problem in his research, arguing that talents' choice to leave local universities is related to the universities' struggles in implementing promised benefits. Zhao suggested that universities should actively

seek the support of local governments and enterprises, and promise housing, salaries, and other benefits to attract more talents. Furthermore, strengthening the standardisation of labour contracts, guaranteeing their legal status, and protecting the rights and interests of talent are potentially effective ways to improve retention.

In addition, the case universities have changed their approach to compensating by establishing complicated dismisal procedures which carry a high penalty. These practices are not only harmful to the universities, but cause lasting and significant harm to talent attraction in less developed. In the case that universities abuse their power excessively, violate contracts, and create obstacles to prevent talented people from leaving their jobs, they will hinder the development of talents, as well as undermine the possibility of establishing harmonious relationships with them. When a talent leaves a university, universities must reflect on the causes for the departure.

First, universities must develop the spirit of the contracts which they ask talent to sign. The spirit of contract represents a university's bottom line and fundamental culture, and is also the basis of talent policy. In the absence of a spirit of contract, fairness and justice cannot exist. It is short-sighted to offer high compensation and take credit for teachers' development; respecting and upholding the rights of teachers is the key to retaining them. In Allen & Vardaman's (2021) study of global talent retention, the influence and importance of institutional, legal and cultural contexts are emphasised. However, few studies have directly discussed the contract issue of talent retention, which is practised in an immature manner in the case universities, and can therefore be used as a negatively illustrative case.

Second, not only the labour contract, but the psychological contract must be developed. This research has highlighted that talent is retained when it is treated with the utmost respect, and universities should pay attention to their own and provide a good working environment for the development of talents. Holland & Scullion (2021) emphasised the need that the psychological contracts be shaped to retain talent, and as Mey et al. (2021) found, feeling like they belong, respecting one another, and being empowered to support their personal development and allowed to function in a flexible and free manner are all factors which support talent retention. In addition, other studies have similarly emphasised respect in university research contexts, such as Hafez et al. (2017), Sinniah et al. (2019) and Amushila &

Bussin (2021).

6.3.4 Talent development

The organizations examined in this study have instituted talent development programs, training initiatives, and educational opportunities aimed at augmenting the skills and knowledge of their talents. The rationale behind such investments in talent development programs is explicated through the lens of HCT. According to Chapman (2006), Chinese universities are under pressure to compete with other employment sectors which may offer more attractive benefits to them. In order to motivate talent to devote their energy and creativity to education, Chinese universities must find ways to attract them and provide them with the necessary organisational and institutional support. This is the problem which the process of talent development is responsive to.

Garavan et al. (2012) argued that as part of a wider talent management process, based on talent identification, talent development usually determines which individuals should drive the development, the pace of development, and the architecture of development. This study tries to answer these questions as with as much detail and rigour as posible.

FDCs, established by universities and advocated by government, drive talent development in China. In universities, FDC is not only a mature practice, but also a trend (Chen, 2022). In spite of its positive impact on the development of university teachers, the government-led reform has many problems n terms of the implementation process, such as the coordination with strategy of universities and differential design, etc. The research of Wu & Guo (2017) stated that the role of teachers has become more diversified as higher education has development, and the development needs of talents in universities vary significantly. In spite of understanding the importance of talents, universities have not sufficiently developed talents as a human capital resource. Zhao (2020) argues that, in order to highlight its own professionalism and build a learning community, FDCs need to develop projects that meet individual needs by giving full consideration to teachers' discipline, age and interests. This is an important new challenge which reflects the need for more intuitively categorised talent management in Chinese universities. The development of university teachers should take into account not only professional development, teaching development, organisational

development, but also include a focus on personal development.

In addition, Li (2013) argued that the development of university teachers is no longer simply a matter for FDCs, but should become a consideration at the level of the university more broadly. Universities need to build good environments for talent development from the perspective of the organisation, systems, resources, projects, funds, and so on. Based on this study, it is clear that talent development is driven by the government. This is because, as public sector institutions, Chinese universities have typically followed passive development models. Passive development models struggle with inertia and which makes the effective selection of an appropriate talent development approach difficult. This study has therefore suggested that university talent development must address the university context and strategy, and adopt teacher-led and teacher initiative development paradigm.

6.4 Linking TM with strategy and organisational culture

The TM practices observed in this study align with the overarching organizational strategy and play a role in achieving strategic objectives. This alignment is consistent with HCT, which posits that synchronizing human capital strategies with organizational goals is crucial.

According to the practices of TM in P University under different strategic periods in the previous chapter, TM is a dynamic development process. Before the reform of HRM in universities, P University, like most public universities in China, had lifelong tenure positions (Bianzhi), and academic labour markets were relatively lacking in terms of both competition and motivation. In the early stages of the development of TM, universities were not sure how to implement it effectively. As a result, they relied strongly on external forces, paid comprehensive attention to context and relevant policies, and integrated their strategic objectives. Second, in order to achieve the purpose of TM, classified management and tenure-track systems were introduced. More specifically, tenure-track posts were used to identify and motivate talent. Third, tenured professors are recognised as a university's greatest asset, but the question of how they can be further developed is a fundamental problem which universities must grapple with. The goal of TM is not only to help talented people become professors, but also to continue to provide them with assistance after they become professors, enabling them to reach even greater heights. In the early phases of their careers, young

teachers typically spend most of their time and energy on scientific research, with teaching merely an incidental activity. For universities to achieve their strategic goals, their focus needs to be shifted from scientific research to research and teaching.

The experience of talent in this process is shown in Figure 6.1, and the role of strategy and culture in the process is also included.

Beginning teachers in adaptive stage	**Tenure-track posts →Associate Professor →Professor**	**Tenured professor**
● Vision ● Context ● Organizational Culture ● Strategy and duty-bond ● ……	● Scientific research tasks ● Teaching ● Tutoring ● ……	● Serve regional economic development ● Teaching ● Tutoring ● Scientific research
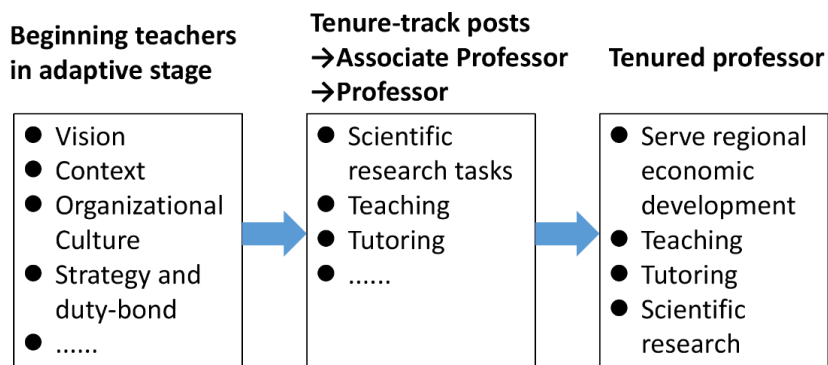
Figure 6.1 Talent development process and key areas of focus

First of all, in accordance with the case descriptions already provided, P University's strategy inherits, and serves to extend, the national strategy. In the second chapter, which was focused on the specifics of the Chinese context, the strategy for strengthening the nation through talent was elaborated. Based on this strategy, P University proposed a strategy for strengthening itself through talent. In addition to its own positioning and strategies at various stages, it formulated holistic strategic objectives and then designed specific TM practices in accordance with these guiding objectives

Second, it is important to unify priorities and perceptions in relation to talent resources. As King (2017) argues, in order to facilitate sustainable talent development, a strong talent system, which King refers to as a talent climate, must be put into place within an organisation. TM has been undergoing policy reforms at P University, and arriving at a consensus view in relation to the deployment of talent resources is the key to overcoming resistance and implementing new policies effectively.

Third, as this research observes in the practice of P University, TM practices are always in line with the university's strategic requirements. This corroborates the claim of by Lewis & Heckman (2006), that TM is able to establish a link between strategy and talent. Silzer &

Dowell (2009) use the concept of strategy-driven TM and focus on practice and issues involved under strategy. P University uses a typical strategy-driven TM model. Cunningham (2007) also illustrated the importance of developing a functional TM strategy. From the perspective of strategic actors, Makram et al. (2017) characterised the value of TM. By drawing on the findings of Makram et al., and the other sources mentioned above, it can credibly be concluded that TM strategy is widely considered part of organisational strategy, and the extent to which it fits an organisation's strategic goals determines the success of the organisation.

Fourth, the culture of P University is something which every employee of the organisation is proud of. It is the sum of the spiritual achievements inherited and created by all the teachers and students. The unviersity's motto, 'walk with our motherland and help the world through science and technology' has developed into a spiritual force, embodied in the spirit of patriotism, scientific thinking and innovation. It is not only reflected in the strategic choices of the university, but also plays an important and positive role in the practice of talent attraction and talent retention. This finding also confirms the conclusion indicated by Kontoghiorghes (2016), namely that strategically aligned and ethically rigorous organisational cultures have a significant effect on talent attraction and talent retention. Moreover, strategic and ethical alignment is extremely conducive to high commitment and motivational work environments. Moreover, the implementation process of strategic TM will gradually reshape the university's culture, which will be suitable for the new forms of strategic management.

N University's strategy includes three strategic levels: the overall development strategy; special strategy planning, such as discipline development strategy, TM strategy, nationalisation strategy, etc.; and the development strategies of each school. Among these three levels of strategies, the overall development strategy of the university is the most developed and programmatic. The overall strategy of university and TM practice shows a top-down, successively initiated process. Following the formulation of the overall strategy, the university is supporting the launch of TM strategic planning and the development of each school. Although the leaders of each school are invited to attend important strategic planning meetings, currently their involvement is superficial and lacks coordination. Therefore, the development planning and TM of each school is simply the decomposition of the large strategy, carried out in such a way that tasks are assigned to all staff at a micro-level. This is a clear example of a top-down strategic setting. However, Noda & Bower (1996) proposed that

strategic decision-making should be a simultaneous, diversified, closed-loop and sequential management activity at the three levels of first-line managers, middle managers and senior managers. Moreover, Brady & Walsh's (2008) proposed an alternative approach in which the strategic direction of the knowledge organisation could be determined by decisions 'bottom-up'. In summary, in addition to achieving its strategic goals through top-down strategic decomposition, the strategic consciousness of each school at N University, and its particular talent, has not fully been exploited, and is subordinated to the overall development direction of the university.

In terms of the content of the strategy itself, N University is a teaching-oriented university, but its mission and strategy both emphasise its intention of developing in the manner of a research university. Consequently, the role of teaching in the strategy is downplayed, and the TM strategy focuses more on scientific research, which reflects the university's current practice. There is clearly insufficient motivation for teachers to engage in teaching, and they are unwilling to devote additional time and energy to it. Teaching activities are marginalised in teachers' daily work and their focus has shifted from teaching-related activities to academic paper output with clear quantitative indices of assessment.

Additionally, TM and 'double-first-class' strategy are interconnected at N University. The development strategy of N University, following the national 'double first-class' university construction strategy, forms the starting point and basis of every teacher's performance objectives. This study found that the most important task of TM at N University is to subdivide strategic goals and deliver them to all teachers, and under the guidance of the double first-class strategy, establish a direct relationship between talents' performance and strategy. Moreover, the double first-class strategy encourages talents to work towards the strategic goals, thereby ensuring that talents' activities and outputs are consistent with the strategy. On the other hand, a high-performing talent pool, however, guarantees the achievement of the strategic goals of N University. For first-class universities to be built, high-level teaching abilities, high-quality scientific research results, and useful social services are required, and it is only through a reasonable design and efficient operation of TM that this these goals can be fully realised, ultimately leading to first-class status for the university.

N University's 'Shazaoshu' spirit supports retention of talents. N University is located in the

north-west of China, with few resources and no environmental advantages. As a means of talent retention, therefore, it relies heavily on emotion and providingopportunities for career advancement. There is a need for dedication and perseverance among talents who are rooted in west China, and hope to serve the region; 'Shazaoshu' is a spirit rooted deep in this arid region, and corresponds to the vales that N is seeking in the talent it recruits. This culture is the framework through which N University identifies retains talent. Moreover, it guides decision-making in terms of what talent is required to do, on which moral norms talent is expected to behavae, how talent is rewarded, and how rights and responsibility are allocated. As Wang & Xie (2023) observed, individual rights and responsibilities are governed by cultural understandings and practices, or, in other words, by what behaviour is considered acceptable or desirable in a given organisation. The 'Shazaoshu' spirit plays the role of cultural understanding and practice in TM at N University.

6.5 Contributions of TM

Two representative universities were selected as the main unit of analysis. After preliminary investigation and data collection, the two case universities were found to have already implemented TM strategy to some extent. However, in terms of location (one university is located in the more developed eastern region, one is located in the developing western region), aim (one university intends to develop itself into a world-class institution, one aims to become a leading university in the western region), orientation (one university is research-oriented, one is teaching-oriented), ranking (one university is ranked highly, one is not), and the characteristics of TM strategy (one university has launched a tenure-track system, one adopts the 'Gongfen' performance system) and other indicators, the two universities differ significantly, and as a result, taken together, comprehensively reflect, and enable a full characterisation of, TM in Chinese universities.

Due to the differences in the situations between the two case universities, this study separately investigated the changes brought about by TM to each university.

P University transplanted the Tenure-track system and identified and assessed new talents with international first-class academic standards; in addition, it implemented the 'up or out' system to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of scientific research, and improve the

performance of teachers; finally, it provided competitive remuneration packages to avoid brain drain. Its tenure-track faculty plays a critical role in the development of teaching, academic research, social services, and other aspects. In turn, success in these areas is helping to transform P University into a world-class university with qualities to match its world-class reputation.

First of all, this study confirmed that TM is clearly a value-creating strategy. Taking a strategy-as-practice approach, Vaiman & Collings (2013) demonstrated that the value of TM is viewed in relation to four areas: translating strategy into talent capabilities, utilising talent potential, extending talent capabilities, and creating a culture that enables talents to thrive. For P University, TM strategy is a process of formulating, implementing and evaluating. This is essential to P University's overall mission, which is to enhance the performance of talents, sharpen the university's competitive advantage, and ensure the university's long-term sustainability. As indicated by Wilska (2014), TM is becoming increasingly strategically necessary for enterprises that are seeking competitive advantages beyond dynamic growth. More broadly, for enterprises to meet the requirements of the contemporary knowledge economy, the ability to extract, fine-tune, and value creativity, and to develop the skills and experience of their employees, are essentially.

Second, based on the findings of this study, the implementation of TM has effectively encouraged academics to focus on scientific research which has lead to more impressive academic achievements. This, in turn, has also played a positive role in the identification of outstanding talents, the promotion of talent flow and the improvement of academic performance. Anwar et al. (2014) also concluded that TM has strategic importance and can contribute to organisational performance. In a study conducted by Huang et al., (2021), academic productivity was examined after permanent employment was converted to tenure-track employment in Chinese universities. It was found that increasing peer competition, refocusing research, and increased collaboration are likely to have a positive effect.

Third, TM has ameliorated the issues of redundant staff and nepotism in academic research. P University is increasingly able to match the talent identification, recruitment system and academic evaluation rules of high-ranking international universities, and has recruited talents globally. It is clear that the open academic labour market constructed by TM can avoid 'Guanxi'

and correct issues in the hiring, developing and promotion of university teachers to a certain extent. Many studies have previously revealed the influence 'guanxi' in Chinese academia (Ju, Zhou and Wang, 2019; Mouritzen, 2022). Zhang (2022) explored the roles of guanxi in talent recruitment and development, and found that TM played a positive role in terms of its impact on ethics. In addition, according to the experience of P University, the development of TM enables teachers to compete, based on their academic ability, for salary increases, research funding, more advanced technology for conducting experiments, development opportunities, and academic independence, thus reducing their dependency on well-known professors and shifting the university's work culture away from nepotism and an overemphasis on seniority.

However, questions remain about the most effective way to implement TM. While TM's understanding at N University is limited, its practice still bring many positive effects.

First, talent pools have been greatly enhanced. N University has introduced 290 Ph.Ds since 2017, and introduced an unprecedented 118 talents in 2022. For a university in western China, attracting and introducing talents is a challenge, and such accomplishments illustrate the great success of TM at N University. In addition, they guarantee the university's development and the achievement of strategic objectives.

Second, individual academic desire increased significantly following the implementation of the performance points system reform at N University. Moreover, it not only provides a direction for employees to advance, ensuring that the individual development is consistent with its overall strategic goal, but it also has significantly improved the academic performance output and the ranking and subject evaluation of N University a short period of time.

Third, teachers in a relatively weak positions in terms of scientific research have received academic training and improved their abilities. Due to the academic qualifications promotion plan, a total of 27 teachers at N University received doctorates in 2022. However, in some cases, development awareness prevented teachers from actively improving their academic level and professional quality in teaching. TM places teachers in the difficult position of being faced with increasing academic performance requirements; more positively, it pushes teachers to step out of their comfort zone and look for breakthroughs

Fourth, N University has adopted a more rational approach after implementing TM, avoiding

'guanxi' networks and the tendency to pick candidates blindly. Currently, candidates are evaluated using a performance points system, and each department determines which activities are awarded points and the value of each activity, including programs, papers and tutoring etc. The design of this system is based more on administrative logic and fair workload distribution than on the actual quality of academic work and development, but it avoids the unfairness which results from a networking-based or relational evaluation model.

6.6 Comparison and Deeper reasons

Despite the different realities, development goals, strategies, and practices adopted by the two universities in implementing TM, there are still many commonalities. These commonalities are the clearest illustration, and most powerful inspiration, for the development of TM in Chinese universities.

Although the two universities do not have specific and clear understanding of talent and TM, both universities fully recognise the importance of TM in attracting talent, improving performance, and achieving strategic goals. They have different ways of practising TM, but both approaches involve talent identification, talent attraction, talent retention, and talent development.

TM in Chinese universities is based on party leadership and serving the national strategy which means Strengthening the Nation with Talent and the construction and development of double first-class universities.   In Chapter 2, these contexts were described in detail and this chapter characterises their significance. It is evident that TM research and practice in Chinese universities are deeply influenced by national policies; these fields should not be separated to ensure a proper understanding of Chinese higher education contexts.

TM practices pose challenges for competitors to replicate, involving an examination of the efficacy of talent development programs, organizational culture, and employee engagement initiatives. The practice of TM is deeply influenced by the organisational culture of universities, such as scientific thinking and the innovative spirit of P University. This has enabled P University's TM to consistently be at the forefront of reform and innovation. In addition, due to profession-based patriotism, TM policies are more inclined to promote research that contributes to the country. On the other hand, N University's Shazaoshu spirit emphasises

talent, dedication and service to the western regions. As a result, the university focuses more on strengthening the psychological contract through spiritual engagement and compatibility, in order to attract and retain talent.

TM practices align with the RBV framework, it supports the idea that human capital is a valuable and strategic resource, and TM strategies create a competitive advantage. A common feature of TM in these two universities is the setting of high standards and quantifiable scientific research indicators and evaluation systems. P University carefully evaluates the academic performance of newly hired teachers in relation to their job requirements, in order to determine whether to provide them with tenure after the expiry of their contract. Those who fail to meet the promotion and title requirements within a certain period of time will no longer be employed. Similarly, N University closely links academic performance with its system of promotion and reward.

Whether due to the tenure-track system (P University) or the performance point system (N University), both approaches apply great pressure on talent. As a result of short-term quantitative assessment, teachers are pushed to produce more papers, which limits their ability to produce truly innovative and valuable research. Although this may, in some cases, trigger a rapid improvement in performance, excessive emphasis on evaluating and rewarding/punishing past performance, coupled with a lack of monitoring, comprehensive feedback and guidance on teacher performance, can lead to talent feeling insecure in their positions leading to anxiety Furthermore, returning to the original intention of TM of two universities, the study found that:

Chinese universities have emphasised fair distribution through mandatory rules, and feedback from the elite group of universities has revealed that procedural justice is widespread, while negotiable rules are lacking. One of the purposes of TM is to deal with the issue of fair distribution; however, in practice, emphasising fair distribution may encourage individuals to be hyper-attentive to their exact workload, and worry about minor inequalities in performance assessments. Some teachers may even resist the tasks assigned to them by the department due to dissatisfaction. The dissatisfaction of talents revealed by this study is consistent with the findings of Kallio & Kallio's (2014). In their study of highly structured performance systems in Finnish universities, they found that only 15% of people were satisfied

with the system, and most people thought that the system design was meaningless. As Weber (1978) warned, the development of formal rational systems may be emphasised at the expense of substantive or value rationality. Teachers may resist the application of a precise and publicly supervised form of mutual supervision, which leaves those who work less than average level open to criticism from colleagues.

This research has argued that the underlying reason behind these issues is that university talents perform academic work based on their own disciplinary training as well as their own concerns and interests. As a result, it is difficult for administrators to exercise effective control over decisions regarding the promotion, employment, course setting, and retention of teachers (Ellenberg, 2010). The academic profession itself has weak solidarity and clear promotion prospects. Therefore, teachers with a strong academic and professional identity do not regard the fair distribution of performance income as equal (Wang & Xie, 2023). This study research reinforces this point.

This research also confirmed that, during the talent performance assessment, the dissemination of information about employees' scores often leads to anxiety and embarrassment, especially for those teachers who receive lower scores. They may feel that they are being excluded from the TM system. Researchers (Wang & Xie, 2023) who advocate for academic power believe that it is best to avoid any quantitative systems of evaluation or at least to reduce evaluation-based activities in evaluating performance. Instead, a looser approach should be used in order to maintain a positive atmosphere within the organisation. This approach appeals to many teachers, as it emphasises well-intentioned encouragement and the scholar's own sense of academic mission.

The socialisation process of talents in universities enables them to develop themselves (Tyler, Hancock and Richardson, 2020). Universities help talents understand organisational expectations, while, ideally, offering opportunities for them to reshape the organisational culture (Tierney, 1997). On the one hand, talents themselves complete the socialisation process through self-adaptation and learning, and constantly reflect on their own development status; on the other hand, universities address the development needs for talents based on organisational culture and development strategy, and provide them with certain development opportunities. However, the balance between these two

complementary is not always consistent (Du, 2019).

Through interviews with talents, the practice of TM and its role in Chinese universities was explored.

This study clearly indicates that Chinese universities are eager for talents, which they currently lack. However, universities typically believe that talent today, to some extent, is abundant and sufficient, and even surplus. This gives universities grounds for strict processes of identification, selection and elimination. Wu & Guo (2017) argue this is partly due to the unreasonable structure of the talent pool in universities, which is characterised by uneven numbers of teachers in traditional, advantageous, and emerging disciplines, and serious talent gaps in other disciplines. Additionally, the age structure is unreasonable, with both younger and older teachers coexisting on similar pay scales. On the other hand, there is a lack of high-level talents, and some teachers have lagged behind in professional development and are urgently need of training and support.

The interviews conducted for this study reveal that there are two main aspects of the attractiveness of universities to talent. One is the idealised identification with one's academic career, and the other is based on practical considerations and trade-offs. In the past, talents often chose to work in universities in pursuit of a sense of security and stability, because the profession of university teacher used to be one of the most stable occupations in China, and was characterised comprehensive job security, even in times of economic uncertainty. However, as a result of ongoing TM reform, positions at university have become precarious. Tian & Lu (2017) revealed the intensified academic pressure and consequent feelings of insecurity, uncertainty and anxiety are frequent among elite employees of Chinese academic institutions which aim to develop into world-class universities. Wang (2021) argued that TM causes administrative work overloads, which undermines talents' work-life balance.

Based on the comparison of two different perspectives, namely, talent policies and practices formulated from the organisational perspective, and the feelings and feedback of talents themselves, this study proposes a number of strategies:

First, provide more opportunities for talent development. The statements recorded through the interview process that talents are looking for: career development, a good work

environment, skill set development, and more decision-making power. This result strongly correlates with the findings of Yue et al. (2020). According to Yue et al., improved research ability, career development, and work environment are the three most influential factors (to talent) in China. In addition, reputation, compensation, and benefits of the (inflow) institution, as well as the S&T Policies of the (inflow) region, are also important factors.

Second, emphasise talents' family contexts, which may have a greater impact on their retention than the expectations of the university. In general, this factor could either facilitate or hinder talent flow. This point has also been addressed by Carr et al. (2005) and Inkson et al. (2004) based on case studies in New Zealand. Other studies involving family factors includes Kerr (2020), Kim (2017) etc. Based on the research described in section 5.2.2, universities have already given consideration to family ties in their strategy for retaining talents, and policies centred around talents' spouses and children were found to be particularly effective.

Third, enhance teachers' self-awareness and guarantee their right to speak and be heard. Other scholars have held similar views. Schreuder & Noorman (2018), for example, stated that talents should become involved in developing strategy so that business development and personal development can be aligned and mutually reinforced. According to Yuniati et al. (2021), talented employees have a desire to participate in organisational decision-making, which creates a positive feeling of engagement among employees. In addition, In Tyskbo's (2021) research in a Swedish public hospital, talents were involved in the identification of other talents.

Through exploring and discussing TM in Chinese universities from various perspectives, a comprehensive understanding of the key issues has been possible. The next section discusses how TM is implemented and practiced at each case university, in terms of approaches, contributions, inspirations and challenges, and also examines the connections between TM and other management concepts.

6.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has shed light on the significant influence of context on TM research and practice. The performance of TM, despite the absence of a unified definition, has contributed to the establishment of a common language for comprehending talent, spanning

from policy to practice. This study aligns with existing literature, emphasizing knowledge, skills, contributions, creativity, and leadership as defining characteristics of talent. 'Political correctness' and 'exemplary morality' emerge as distinctive elements in defining talent in Chinese universities. The study suggests that these aspects are prerequisites rather than components of finalized definitions, representing a gap in talent research in the Chinese context. Therefore, this study highlights understanding and respecting Chinese cultural nuances is crucial. This includes considerations related to Confucian values, hierarchical structures, and the significance of guanxi. Furthermore, this study always considers the influence of government policies.

Chinese universities, despite lacking a universally accepted understanding of TM, have actively engaged in its practice, recognizing its pivotal role in strategic and organizational development. The overarching goal of TM is to enhance university performance by achieving strategic objectives, overcoming barriers to talent development, transforming high-potential individuals into dominant talents, and maximizing the value of their talents. It involves tailoring talent strategies, identification, attraction, retention, and development programs to align with the unique characteristics and values prevalent in the Chinese organizational landscape.

The findings emphasize the significance of talents as invaluable assets within the framework of HCT. The definition of Chinese university talent centers around research output, particularly publications, aligning with the importance of human capital in organizational success. The study also underscores the influential role of the Party leadership in determining TM in Chinese universities. Government-issued talent policies play a crucial role in attracting, retaining, and managing talent, aligning with broader national goals. Universities are seen as morally responsible for the growth and development of talents, aligning with Confucian principles. The study emphasizes the duty of universities to protect and develop talents, contributing to a broader talent pool. Talents identified and nurtured through TM initiatives are recognized for their positive contributions to organizational goals. The study establishes a positive correlation between investments in human capital and organizational performance, reinforcing the significance of TM.

The last section of this chapter undertakes a comprehensive summarization and analysis of

the two case universities, highlighting key findings from the comparative study. Both universities acknowledge the importance of TM in attracting talent, improving performance, and achieving strategic goals. Despite lacking specific definitions of talent and TM, both institutions incorporate talent identification, attraction, retention, and development in their TM approaches. The unique cultures of P University and N University influence their TM practices, with P University leading in reform and innovation and N University focusing on talent dedication and service to specific regions.

TM practices, particularly those linked to the tenure-track system or performance point system, exert pressure on talent. The short-term quantitative assessment may lead to a focus on quantity over innovative research, potentially impacting the quality of academic contributions. The study identifies issues with the emphasis on fair distribution in TM. While intended to address fairness, it may lead to hyper-attention to exact workloads and dissatisfaction among teachers, echoing findings from studies in other contexts. Chinese universities express eagerness for talents, but the study reveals a perception of talent abundance. Strict identification, selection, and elimination processes are attributed to an imbalanced talent pool and gaps in various disciplines. This comprehensive overview also captures the multifaceted nature of TM in Chinese universities, considering organizational practices, challenges, and potential strategies for improvement. Proposed strategies include providing more opportunities for talent development, emphasizing talents' family contexts, and enhancing teachers' self-awareness and right to speak. These recommendations aim to address identified challenges in TM.

All research questions and sub-questions posed in this study have been thoroughly addressed, providing a comprehensive understanding of TM in the Chinese university context. Chinese university is an opportunity-rich context for TM implementation. Factors like decentralization of higher education management autonomy and the context of double first-class present opportunities for universities to develop TM.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Summary of this research

This study examines the development of TM in Chinese universities. A double-case study approach was used, with two universities located in the eastern and western regions of China, both of which have adopted a significant TM approach. The reason for selecting two universities with significant differences in ranking and level of regional development is to broaden this study's scope and, thereby, provide a more comprehensive interpretation of TM progress and issues in Chinese universities. To obtain a more holistic and in-depth exploration of the issue, this study used a qualitative approach and conducted 44 semi-structured in-depth interviews (in-person or online). This study divided the participants into three groups, namely leadership, administrators, talent pool, and gave more attention and further interviews to those who needed help.

This paper revolves around several research questions, the first of which is "What is the role of talent management in Chinese universities?" To address this question, this study thoroughly reviewed the origins, current state of research, theoretical grounding, and existing definitions of TM. Having completed this stage, this study explored key insights from the different groups of people through in-depth interviews. The results of the study are formed based on these interviews. Then, based on the descriptions and analyses of both university cases, this study identified the following research questions: What does the concept of TM mean in Chinese university? How is TM implemented in Chinese university? How does TM fit with strategy and organisational culture? What are the main issues/challenges of implementing TM in particular Chinese universities?

7.1.1 The meaning of Talent Management

In previous studies (Thunnissen et al., 2013; Stoeger et al., 2018; Wiblen & McDonnell, 2020), talent has not been defined in a unified or comprehensive way. Previous studies (Latukha et al., 2019; Howard, 2019; Goleman, 2015) have identified the common keywords that define talent, including 'key employees', 'high-performing workers', 'high potentials' and also terms that describe their intrinsic qualities, and the findings of this support the relevance of these keywords for the characterisation of TM. However, using the policies of two case universities

to define talent, this study found that political correctness, exemplary morals, certain knowledge and skills, positive contributions to university success, and creative outcomes are the elements that define talent. Based on the interview results, this study found that in practice, talent in Chinese universities is generally defined in terms of published papers and participation in funded research programmes.

A large number of previous literature reviews focused on conceptualising TM were used to define TM in this study, such as Scullion & Collings (2011), Lewis & Heckman (2017), Collings and Mellahi (2009) and McDonnell (2011) etc. All of these literature reviews present highly constructive conceptual frameworks. Based on a study of these pre-existing literature reviews, this study defined TM as the process of identifying, attracting, retaining and developing core talent resources that are closely related to the competitive advantage and high performance of the organisation, so as to help enterprises and individuals maximise their long-term advantages and provide a continuous supply of talent. In analysing the talent policies of Chinese universities specifically, this study found that TM aims to provide comprehensive talent development and incentives, improve the performance of universities to achieve strategic goals, resolve various talent shortages and challenges faced by talents, and develop more high-potential talents while maximising their utility. TM in Chinese universities is based on Party leadership, and its field and context are talent policy at all levels. Taking into consideration individual talents, this study aims to investigate and, if necessary, reconsider what motivates them to choose a university, why they leave, and what they need to succeed in their new roles. Determining these factors will lead to a better understanding of the policy-practice gap.

	Definition based on literature reviews	Definition based on Policies	Definition based on Practice
Talent	key employees, high-performing workers with high potential	political correctness, exemplary morals, certain knowledge and skills, positive contribution to university success, creative outcomes	published papers and funded programmes
TM	the process of identifying, attracting, retaining and developing core talent resources that are closely related to the competitive	Devoted to providing comprehensive talent development and incentives, improving the performance of universities in achieving	The value system of TM includes the abilities and contributions of talents, specifically the

advantage and high performance of the organisation, so as to help enterprises and individuals maximise their long-term advantages and provide a continuous supply of talent.	strategic goals, and solving various talent shortages and obstacles, while fully utilising talent and promoting more high-potential talents to become the leading talents. Party leadership is the basic principle and characteristic of China's university TM, and talent policies at all levels constitute the field and context of TM.	efficiency of scientific research output. TM has functions such as talent identification, talent evaluation, and talent development.

An analysis of these factors reveals the difference between theory and reality, between policy and practice, when talent and TM are defined in the Chinese context in this study. First of all, this distinction fully verifies the importance of context for TM research. To resolve conflicts and discomfort which result from the process of implementation, there must be a localisation process both theoretically and practically. Putting talents in context reminds universities that, while focusing on the development of talents, they must also consider changing policies. TM in Chinese universities is highly influenced by mutual influence between the regional economy, social, and political field, and universities themselves.

Second, although policymakers hope to obtain support from theoretical research, they do not always collaborate effectively because of different contexts, different goals, and different responses to rewards and incentives. On this point, this study found that there is still a gap between theoretical research on TM and policy-making by bureaucrats, which hinders the implementation and development of TM. However, from what this study has revealed, it is clear that existing TM theory is logically consistent with practice, empirically effective, and also capable of explaining to some extent the complexities of phenomena and behaviours. Throughout this paper, TM theories and their theoretical foundation are used to situate an understanding of past TM practices in Chinese universities, and it can be anticipated that these theories will inevitably influence future policies. By combining TM theory, policy, and practice, decision-makers can gain a better understanding of their current situation, evaluate the attractiveness and feasibility of policy options, and formulate more practical solutions. In addition, in terms of both policy and practice, due to the fact that the party dominates talent policy, Chinese universities are concerned regarding the loss of academic autonomy. As a

result of the late start and incomplete development of the TM system, political ideology and social and economic forces can easily affect the decision-making of TM and the research behaviour of scholars. In this context the feelings and demands of talents themselves need more attention from policy makers, specifically in terms of professional development, a good working environment, skill set development and more decision-making power.

7.1.2 The significance of strategy and organisational culture to TM

As organisations that need greater freedom due to specialisation, Chinese universities are heavily dependent on the institutional environment in terms of increasing information exchange and cooperation with the government, to create a favourable environment for themselves. The Double First-class Strategy (building first-class universities and first-class disciplines) has been an important national strategy for TM development at Chinese universities. Although world-class university is a vague and relational concept, there is no doubt about the significance of outstanding talent pools to universities. Therefore, universities have typically concluded that TM strategy offers a crucial means of addressing the key, overall, and long-term development issues which they face. Different university types, historical traditions, and development foundations require different strategies. Universities should advance strategies that meet their own development requirements and use such strategies to lead the construction of first-class universities and first-class disciplines. Strategically, a mature state of university development is a positive and motivating vision. Having clarified their vision of their future development, universities in China need to conceptualise the long-term pursuit of the development vision in stages and formulate goals to be achieved at different stages of development, so as to develop a clear roadmap for growth. A TM strategy is established according to the university's life cycle, development vision, short-, medium-, and long-term development goals. This study suggests that:

Development strategies and TM strategy for Chinese universities have been developed based on full compliance with the national strategic vision, and these strategies complement one another. A TM strategy should therefore comply with and help complete an organisation's development strategy, followed by a further decomposition of the organisation's strategic goals, thereby linking strategy to talent. Many universities are pushing ahead with TM reform. This raises key questions, such as what problems TM reform should solve, what goals should

be achieved, and how to achieve the goals. All of these questions should be resolved at the level of strategy.

A TM strategy without resource support is necessarily ineffective, and to be effective, it is necessary that a TM strategy is unified with resource support. This study found that when the case universities made strategies and plans, they often advanced a large number of goals, but paid little attention to resources. Goals must be represented with correlative resource requirements, and the implementation of TM strategy needs to be fully guaranteed by these resources. If the direction and measures of resource raising can be clarified, TM strategy can be implemented more effectively.

Developing high-quality and high-level development strategies involves talents. This study found that administrative departments in Chinese universities have great power and often play a major role in the formulation and implementation of university strategies. As a result of this emphasis, implementation is characterised by very low participation rates and among talents, and a lack of awareness, among talents, of the strategies.

In addition, culture in Chinese universities is lacking in innovation, and those in power tend to use historical, cultural forms, which is viewed as an important inheritance, as a model rather than innovate. Cultural change and progress, however, are often vague, and their impact is implicit. As a result, few people are aware of its significance, since it is hidden in the university environment, system and the behaviour of teachers, students and staff, and its influence is subtle.

This study argues that culture cannot be ignored in to the promotion of TM at universities. The culture at the case universities was found to greatly affect TM. Through the spirit of sacrifice and dedication, the intensive pursuit of talents is developed in the western region, which results in high retention rates. Also, culture encourages talents to identify with university institutional reform by encouraging patriotism, scientific thinking, and the transmission of innovation, and talents choose their own development path determined by university development strategy. Educational philosophy and positioning with distinctive cultural characteristics truly rooted in faculties' hearts can guide TM to achieve smooth implementation.

Accordingly, this study concludes that although existing cultures have an intimate connection with TM and have had a positive impact on its implementation, universities should still promote and encourage cultural innovation so that TM can be implemented and developed more effectively. Moreover, through the change of TM practices, talent behaviour, and values, universities can achieve healthy and rapid development.

To fully leverage the positive guiding role of university culture in TM, it is necessary to coordinate and unify the cultural characteristics of the university with actual strategic management, construct a university culture with its own characteristics and matching strategies, and and ensure the university's TM goals and core values are internalised by all employees through the guiding role of culture.

7.1.3 Contributions of TM

According to our research, TM has gradually developed three localisation characteristics during its implementation in Chinese universities:

First, Chinese universities are practicing TM for the purpose of establishing first-class talent pools and achieving first-class universities. As different practices are developed, a more academic incentive function is highlighted. The goal of this function is to stimulate teachers' enthusiasm for academic work by providing them with favourable treatment and a stable environment in order for them to achieve their full potential. Therefore, TM, in fact, functions as an academic screening process that identifies, attracts, retains, and develops scholars with academic interests and potential in Chinese universities.

Second, teachers' scientific research output is considered to be the most important index to measure TM in Chinese universities. Institutions have, therefore, been orientated to encourage talents to produce more scientific research. However, a system based on short-term quantitative assessment not only leads to difficulties in identifying and gathering talents who have academic interests and potential, but also puts a lot of pressure on talents and creates tensions between them and the system in which they work.

Third, the logic of administrationalism has a remarkable influence on the process of TM in Chinese universities. During the implementation of the system, universities take the talent

policies issued as guidance, and all departments function as primary executors in their specific contexts. There is a lack of communication and feedback across levels, and talent's opinions and voices are ignored. Talents lack decision-making rights in TM practice; administrative departments have more power to shape the discourse and, as a result, institutional logic is the main determinant of TM in practice.

TM's contributions to the two case universities were discussed in this study. The study found some evidence that TM plays a positive role in Chinese universities despite being implemented variously.

(1) Scientific research output has increased significantly. TM provides academic career development goals and performance incentives, and tries to create a relatively free and relaxed scientific research environment, all of which help stimulate teachers' motivation for scientific research.

(2) TM enhances the connection between the strategy and talents within the organisation, clarifies to the role of talents in organisational strategy, and links the personal development goals of talents with the development goals of organisations.

(3) The talent pool has been established and supplemented, which provides a guarantee for organisations to gain long-term advantages, and will provide key talent to the university on an ongoing basis. The introduction of high-standard talent has established the direction and benchmark for the talent pool, and the talent flow in the competitive environment has formed more equitable processes of talent identification, promotion and resource allocation in Chinese universities.

(4) TM helps build international talent employment, and promotion system and provides predictable and clear career prospects and development opportunities, so as to better attract outstanding talents in the context of global competition. TM also supports raising salaries to internationally competitive levels, enhancing Chinese universities' ability to attract talent and compete in academic markets worldwide.

(5) On account of the success of some TM practices, the possibility of a systematic TM practice system for Chinese universities is being explored. This study found that universities try to fully

stimulate the academic vitality of talents and develop talents through TM to cope with external competitive pressure.

7.1.4 Challenges of implementing TM in Chinese universities

The first challenge is maintaining the autonomy of universities. This study found that, as a result of the influence of governmental logic overwhelming the logic of universities and culture in Chinese universities the role of academic spirit, institutional characteristics, and free innovation in universities has been reduced. In order to gain advantages in resource competition, universities have to comply with governmental logic, closely follow national strategies and talent policies, continuously increase their research investment, and engage in a quantitative comparison among universities, forcing universities to set higher research performance targets to cope with competition. Universities are mainly funded by the government and it is therefore to the government that universities must respond. However, the demands of the government are often utilitarian and pragmatic.

The second challenge results from TM deviating from its original purpose. Efficiency and fairness, competition and protection should be fully taken into account, and institutional risks should be avoided to the greatest possible extent, while institutional performance is enhanced. In the context of the new managerialism and performance-oriented TM reform, institutional risks such as academic differentiation and academic utilitarianism inevitably result. This study has shown that the use of a rationalist logic of efficiency and quantitative rules have become deeply embedded in the practice of TM in Chinese universities in spite of the diversity of specific TM practices and approaches. This suggests that the implementation of TM in Chinese universities is based on an economic and rationalist conception of humanity. Its distinctive feature is to attract talents by means of high salaries, tap talents' potential, and stimulate academic output through goal-oriented and result-oriented performance evaluation, quantitative assessment requirements, and performance rewards. Overly frequent performance appraisal systems and rigid up-or-go procedures may induce impetuosity, utilitarianism, and short-sightedness in all talents who are faced with employment, promotion, and performance assessment.

The third challenge relates to the lack of internal consensus among the talent pool on TM which has, to a certain extent, hindered the advancement of TM, and the negative emotions

of talents have formed in relation to institutional barriers. TM of Chinese universities functions as an academic competition. Scientific research output has become a hard currency, and not publishing means being eliminated in the promotion process. This influences the processes of talent identification, recruitment, promotion, performance evaluation, salary and rewards, etc. In academic evaluation, the approach which universities adopt causes fierce competition between talents, and relative rankings, based on competition results, determines job offers. As a result of limited resources, opportunities are exclusive, and there is a competitive relationship between talents, which, to some extent, hinders cooperation, causing tension and instability between individual talents. In addition, the workload and mental pressure which teachers face have increased, and teachers continue to lack decision-making power in management. Administrative forces often interfere with academic research, and teachers' autonomy is restricted, which reduces their professional dignity, making it difficult for them to maximise their value in the long term.

The fourth challenge relates to the development of a favourable talent ecosystem. Organisational culture and value systems serve as the soft power of universities, influencing individuals in the academic community to adhere to academic standards and align their personal development with that of the university. This is the key to ensuring the sustainable competitiveness of universities. Compared to managerialism, which relies on high salaries, strict incentives, and evaluations to stimulate productivity, a relaxed and free academic atmosphere, a good academic culture, and excellent academic peers are more likely to inspire teachers' interest, enthusiasm, and intrinsic motivation. In addition, the internal and external guarantees of the reform restrict the effectiveness of TM implementation.

7.2 Contribution to knowledge and understanding

The contribution of this study to knowledge and understanding is multifaceted, and it is intricately tied to the unique context of China.

First, cultural context and influence. This research significantly advances TM literature by introducing a Chinese context, deeply influenced by its rich history and cultural traditions, particularly the philosophical underpinnings of Confucianism. Recognizing the impact of context on organizational structures and practices, this study explores how these cultural

factors shape the understanding and implementation of TM in China. The emphasis on context underscores the importance of cultural nuances in TM, contributing to a more holistic and culturally sensitive approach.

Second, political and institutional dynamics. This study delves into the intricate interplay between politics, institutional logic, and TM in the Chinese context. By unveiling the influence of political correctness and the party leadership structure on defining talent, the research adds a layer of depth to our understanding of TM. It also addresses a prior research gap by meticulously exploring the impact of institutional logic and the National TM strategy on TM practices, offering insights into how these factors shape strategic decisions in talent management within the Chinese socio-political landscape.

Third, integration of academic and mainstream TM theories. This study bridges the gap between Chinese academic perspectives on TM and mainstream TM theories, providing a systematic integration. By establishing a common language for TM research in the Chinese context, the research promotes a more coherent and unified understanding of TM, contributing to the development of global TM knowledge. This integration is particularly crucial in clarifying definitions, concepts, and strategic significance, fostering a more cohesive discourse within the academic community.

Fourth, evolutionary process in Chinese universities. Through a policy-to-practice approach, the research not only captures the evolutionary process of TM implementation in Chinese universities but also elucidates the causal relationships within the phenomenon. This approach not only offers a comprehensive view of TM practices but also provides valuable insights into the decision-making processes, actions taken, and events that shape TM practices within Chinese universities. This study's practical perspective enhances the understanding of complex TM practices and serves as a valuable resource for future researchers and practitioners seeking to navigate the dynamism and complexity of TM implementation.

Fifth, public sector focus and talent-centric analysis. Addressing a critical gap in TM research, this study focuses on Chinese universities as representatives of the public sector. This choice of research object sheds light on TM dynamics within typical public sector organizations, enriching the literature by providing insights specific to this sector. Moreover, the research

adopts a talent-centric analysis, offering a comprehensive description of talent views and analyzing TM implementation and challenges from diverse perspectives, transcending the conventional organizational focus.

Sixth, comparative analysis across universities. The selection of two universities with diverse characteristics enables a nuanced exploration of TM strategies and implementation. By comparing institutions with different geographical locations, economic development situations, rankings, positioning, TM strategies, and organizational cultures, this study sheds light on both the similarities and differences in TM practices among universities with distinct natures and levels. This comparative analysis contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the contextual variations in TM strategies.

7.3 Implication for practice

From policy to practice, this study comprehensively investigated and described TM in Chinese universities. The practical implications are as follows:

First, according to this study, although TM has not been implemented for a long time, and is not yet systematic and mature in Chinese universities, it has already made significant contributions and demonstrated its practical value. Therefore, this study recommends that universities take more forceful measures to promote the comprehensive implementation of TM, with the participation and awareness of both leadership and all faculties. Chinese universities should pay full attention to the essential characteristics of talent in every aspect and stage of innovation TM, and fully explore the needs of talents in work and life according to their characteristics, so as to maximise the value of talents.

Second, in the implementation of TM, the organisational culture of the university is essential and plays a crucial role in ensuring the effective implementation of the strategy. Organisational culture ensures that talent remains consistent with overall development in behaviour and thinking. Therefore, during the implementation phase of university strategic management, particular attention should be paid to the role of university's organisational culture in effective implementation and its impact on talent and sustainable development of the university. Firstly, university leaders need to have the determination and perseverance to change the university culture and explain the significance of cultural change and strategies to

all faculties. Secondly, managers and staff whose behaviour and values are most compatible with the university culture should be promoted. Finally, departments that are compatible with the university culture and strategy should be established, and all faculties should be mobilised to pay attention to the construction of university culture, strengthen the strategic significance of TM, and thereby achieve the holistic development of TM from culture to strategy.

Third, this study found that the reform of talent classification management in Chinese universities not only provides diversified career development paths for different lecturers but also serves as the basis for the salary system, performance management system, and promotion system with its contribution-oriented and dynamically balanced characteristics. Based on the empirical data generated by this study, in my view the core of TM in China currently lies in the implementation of teacher classification, which has proven to be highly effective. This constitutes a more universal approach to TM and further improve the TM system in higher education.

Fourth, universities should address the contradiction between long-term impact and short-term efficiency in scientific research output. As an institution that serves the dual function of fundamental theoretical innovation and meeting the major strategic needs of the country, universities need to move beyond an evaluative approach which emphasises quick results. They should not only focus on the direct social benefits of academic achievements but also fully recognise the exploratory, long-term, and uncertain nature of theoretical research. To achieve this, universities should create a relaxed academic research environment within the TM system. In the case studies, a close relationship was apparent between the universities' talent ecology and talent development. Talented individuals tend to seek development in politically free environments, culturally rich, socially harmonious, economically superior, and offer more development opportunities. A university's talent ecology directly affects the survival and development of its talent, and the effective implementation of TM in universities depends on a sound talent ecology that exhibits democracy and freedom in political terms, harmony in multidimensional interpersonal relationships and coordination in terms of work, encourages positive and enterprising attitudes and a symbiotic cultural ecology, and fairness and efficiency in economic terms.

Fifth, in addition to producing explicit achievements in teaching, scientific research, and social

services, universities need to pay more attention to the needs of talents. While focusing on their professional development, emotional expression, psychological resilience and self-efficacy etc., should not be ignored, and universities must also help talents deal with transformation and professional development. Moreover, if Chinese universities want to become first-class universities with sufficient development resources, reflective of their profound cultural heritage, they need to consider the adverse effects of negative emotions on talent comprehensively.

The development of a university and the professional development of teachers should be inherently unified and mutually reinforcing. However, in reality, the relationship between these two developmental processes is one of constraint or conflict. The fundamental reason for this is that a contractual employer and employee relationship exists between the university and the talent. This relationship is essentially a relationship of domination and subordination. If not handled properly, it can easily lead to opposition or conflict between the two parties, especially in terms of performance evaluation. Performance standards can be tailored according to different stages of a talent's career development in order to mitigate such conflicts.

7.4 Limitations of this research and directions for future research

Some possible limitations of this study are:

First, the number of cases chosen in this study is not sufficient. ① There are numerous universities in China, each with its own unique characteristics, and there are significant differences between universities in different regions and with different positioning. Although this study aimed to cover more possibilities of TM by selecting two representative universities that are entirely different in all aspects, it is still not enough to cover all possible situations. ② As a dual-case study, this research found some common patterns through comparative analysis, but further verification is needed, using more cases to establish these patterns in a broader context. Future studies can further explore the phenomenon and more unique aspects suggested by this study in greater depth.

Second, the literature on TM in Chinese universities is not sufficient. Reviewing literature can provide a theoretical basis for research. Although this study thoroughly combed through TM-

related literature and discussed China's relevant research contributions in each section of this paper, unfortunately, literature on TM in China, especially within the university context, is limited. Although this study was not strictly confined to TM keywords and included relevant studies of Chinese universities, the lack of existing literature on this topic still caused some limitations. For example, in the case description, insufficient dialogue with previous literature limited the theoretical contributions. However, this also provides an opportunity for future research gaps to be filled. Hope this study can function as a reference for future research and encourage more attention to be paid to TM research in the Chinese context.

Third, research limitations due the researcher's particular subject position may have been a limitation. ① The researcher's limited research experience and explanatory acuity could be a limitation. This study attempted to review China's national talent policies and political environment, evaluated TM policies from the perspective of universities, and collected research data from the personal experiences of university teachers. To achieve this, different viewpoints and opinions of various interest groups were gathered. However, this analysis involved both public issues, in terms of social structures, and personal struggles in local environments, and the analysis of these categories required both transcending personal perspectives and grasping the nuances of complex social relationships. In the face of such complex situations and a vast amount of information, it was necessary to generalize, to some extent, to effectively articulate the issue. ② The researcher's cultural and linguistic biases may have led to some limitations in this study. This study was conducted in the context of China, with Chinese scholars participating in the discussions. Therefore, the interviews were conducted in simply Chinese and analysed based on that language. During the writing of the paper, this study translated and paraphrased the cited parts, which may have resulted in some semantic differences from the original. ③ this study has not been able to completely separate the entanglement between research and common sense. As an academic myself, it is sometimes difficult for me to see beyond my subjective perspective and pre-existing ideas. Although I frequently reminded myself to maintain a discovery-oriented attitude throughout the research process, even when I thought I had rid myself of its influence, it would catch me off guard. Moreover, it is difficult to verify that I have successfully avoided the entanglement of my own subjective impressions in all my judgments, and it is possible that this has influenced some of my conclusions.

Fourth, this paper discusses the policies and practices of TM, but it still focuses on the issues existing within the TM system. There is a lack of empirical evidence on the extent to which these practices are recognised and have had practical impacts, as well as their role in talent development. Therefore, further research is needed to explore this particular issue deeper.

In addition, there were also some practical limitations. During the period of this study, travel restrictions due to COVID-19 prevented immersive on-site observation. Although sufficient data was collected and interviews were conducted, the lack of on-site interviews and observations may have limited the research process.

More suggestions for future research:

First, there is still a lack of research on TM in the Chinese context, but it remains an important issue, to which research has much to contribute. This study hope that more research recognises the important role that unique contextual factors play in TM research, and delves into the underlying mechanisms behind these influences. Specific TM theories can be established within particular social and cultural contexts, in order to develop more generalisable TM theories.

Second, in future research, the implementation of TM should be addressed based on the existing policies and from a more macro perspective. Based on this, an empirical analysis and research on the development process and results of TM in Chinese universities, which uses a theoretical framework formed in relation to stakeholder theory, game theory, system change theory and governance theory would be highly desirable. Such a study would effectively reveal the mechanism of talent development and enable innovation in how TM is modelled in Chinese universities.

Third, through more empirical research, the theoretical framework of TM in universities should be further improved and refined. It is particularly important that the TM system based on functional modules is investigated.

Fourth, further studies should include a broader range of perspectives and influencing factors. For example, can universities reflect on and adjust TM strategies based on cultural orientation? Currently, this question cannot be answered based on existing research, though future

research might be able to provide an answer. Moreover, future research can further discuss the new changes brought by talent development into higher education institutions and the new organisational culture which has developed as a result.

Finally, in the face of the pressure brought by TM, more research should further explore the internal emotional needs of talents, action strategies and their relationships with each other.

7.5 Reflections of a researcher

I had expected to feel overexcited at this point, but my heart is calm and peaceful, mixed with a little reluctance, as if facing an inevitable farewell, with a small amount of reverence and awe. Writing this thesis has been the most central emotional experience in my life over the past few years. Looking back, I see myself courageously struggling with the many pitfalls which academic research entails, and overcoming challenges such as how to write a literature review, how to design interview outlines, how to conduct interviews efficiently, how to code, how to process data, and so on. Despite the difficulties, I never doubted my ability to find answers. This confidence and self-efficacy were the result of the support of my supervisor, family, friends, and many kind and enthusiastic research participants. In addition, I have grown academically through this study, which has made me confident that I have the ability to continue to develop, and this knowledge has become the source of my inner calm and peace. As for my research experience, it includes the following breakthroughs in how I understand research:

(1) From phenomena to research questions.

This step was the starting point of my research, which started from real-world problems, and developed through a literature review and the identification of research questions. As a member of the university, I have a deep personal sense of the challenges of researching Chinese universities. In the years before starting this research, I always felt trapped in the university, struggling for survival and development. I have repeatedly reviewed my past work experience, and I concluded that TM in China must consider the university field, which is full of talent and is also a microcosm of society. In the year when I applied for my Ph.D., a series of events occurred in China. Firstly, the Double First-Class strategy was implemented, and various universities responded strongly. In addition, a young talent at a famous university in

China committed a paranoid murder due to the up-or-out system. Given this context, I felt that the current TM situation in Chinese universities is a controversial topic worth exploring and systematically studying. Therefore, I hoped to start this research with an exploratory perspective, aiming to clarify the reality of TM in Chinese universities, find the meaning of TM, and fulfil a deeply felt conviction.

However, personal bias could not influence my decision. When choosing a topic, I maintained my focus on the significance of the research to be undertaken, and it was during this process that I began to understand the role of literature review in research, especially in identifying research gaps and finding potential areas for innovation. It became clear to me that without a clear literature review, there would be no clear research questions and problem-solving ideas. By understanding the insights of previous research, and standing on the shoulders of giants, I raised my own questions and expressed my own ideas. It was only when I truly identified and answered the question- "Why do this research?" from a theoretical perspective, that I began this research journey and was able to further refine the research questions.

(2) From research questions to research design

Based on the research questions and my own research conditions, I selected the most suitable research approach - qualitative research. Making this choice was not easy for me, because before this, I had no experience in conducting qualitative research, nor did I know anything about the philosophical orientation behind it. Fortunately, I received systematic education regarding methodology and made great efforts and training for it. Based on my deeper understanding of the relevant issues, I made a series of choices regarding research philosophy, methods, and tools, starting from ontology and epistemology. In order to better plan each step of the research, I enrolled in many online courses and training camps on qualitative research for myself, hoping to arrange my research steps more reasonably and in a more focused way, to compensate for any potential shortcomings that might result from lack of experience.

Perhaps the most significant challenge I encountered in the process of research design was that I had to constantly question whether I was doing the right thing. All research methods contain some compromises with reality, and sometimes, I may have overlooked this fact and

presented my research findings as more absolute than can be guaranteed empirically. In fact, no method is perfect, and I needed to recognise in a timely manner that the limitations of any method lie in its compatibility with the problem to be solved. Whenever I thought about this, I had to stop and return to my starting point, and then review what I had done once again.

(3) From research design to collect data

Collecting data specifically for the research question and transcribing it into analysable text was a key step in the research process. I believe that this step is a one of the key aspects of research work at a higher level. Completing this step helped me to delve into the research questions and understand the research phenomenon from the perspective of the research object. In this process, efficiently collecting empirical data was key to my success.

Choosing and gaining access to the two case universities was also a significant challenge for me. I needed to meet my selection criteria while also finding two universities that were distinct. Additionally, I needed to obtain the support and permission of both universities. In this process, early communication was critical, and I needed to leverage my personal connections. As I worked at one of the universities, this was an advantage, and I was trusted to conduct research within the organisation. Moreover, I knew whom to approach for interviews and typically received positive responses. However, selecting and gaining access to the other case university was not as smooth as I imagined, especially as the process coincided with the outbreak of Covid-19. This university was in another city in the east of the country, and travel restrictions made it impossible to conduct on-site research and visits. Instead, all communication had to be conducted online, but fortunately, I eventually received the necessary support.

(4) From empirical data to theoretical concepts

This was another important challenge in the development of my research. Through coding, I was able to transform the collected data to the level of concepts and theories. By exploring the similarity or connectivity between particular words which characterised the qualitative data, I uncovered meaningful themes. This step is easier said than done and requires the ability to precisely abstract and summarise material as well as theoretical sensitivity. That is why, as a beginner in scientific research, I found qualitative research more challenging than I

had imagined.

As the amount of data grew exponentially, it was a challenge for me to select relevant information and incorporate it into my research question coherently. When I completed the first draft, my paper was surprisingly lengthy, at 120,000 words. I realised that research cannot include every detail, and if I included all information, I might not be able to effectively convey my intended message. Therefore, I had to make tough decisions and heavily edit my thesis.

In the whole research process, the most challenging part for me was probably being one of the few researchers studying TM in Chinese context. I struggled with finding the right entry point to engage with a sufficient number of relevant individuals, identifying research questions that showcase the reality of China, and figuring out how to effectively present the Chinese story. I hope to help my readers understand the ideology of a completely different society, both politically and culturally, and connect the concept of TM, as it is understood in the West, to the local demands of China. By doing so, I hope to facilitate a dialogue between the TM issues in Chinese universities and global research and contribute to the systematic study of TM in China.

Therefore, I read as much literature as possible to better understand each TM attempt made by Chinese universities. However, the reality is that I cannot read and keep track of all the latest developments in the field, and as a non-native English speaker, I struggled to fully express my ideas through academic writing. Nevertheless, I chose to stay as close to reality and culture as possible, bringing my unique experiences and wisdom to TM field.

In conclusion, the process of conducting this research has involved constantly reviewing literature and striking a balance between building on traditional research and breaking away from it. It also includes integrating academic care and demonstrating the significance of the research. Additionally, it involves exploring how to incorporate a local perspective, while still being able to engage in global academic communication. In the end, I highly valued the opportunity to conduct this research and hope that it will be seen, read, and responded to.

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Appendix One: Research Invitation Letter

（version I, 2020-6-13）

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刘梦琼
英国赫尔大学商学院博士研究生
Mengqiong Liu
PhD Candidate – Faculty Business, Law and Politics
The university of Hull, HU6 7RX, United Kindom
M: +447821269698; M: +8618695455106
E: m.liu-2018@hull.au.uk

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TALENT MANAGEMENT IN CHINESE UNIVERSITY CONTEXT
中国高校人才管理研究

Dear XXXX,

I would like to invite your organization to take part in a qualitative research study conducted in partial fulfilment of my PhD research program. The purpose of this research is to examine how talent management is implemented and contributes in your organization and how talent management fits with strategy and organizational culture.

This research explores insights to improve the understanding of talent management in Chinese university and contribute to revealing the context with Chinese characteristics. The aim of this study is to truly present the development status of talent management in Chinese universities, clarify the issues and challenges encountered and the reasons behind, address their development needs from organizational perspective as well as individual perspective, explore the talent management system in Chinese context and help universities to carry out more effective talent management. The findings of this research will contribute to advancing the knowledge and understanding of both practitioners and academics on talent management, and it will also provide decision-makers in your organization with new insights of talent management, which will then hopefully better fits with strategies and culture in your organization and an opportunity to realize further development.

In return of your participation, I intend to:

- Share and discuss with you the overall findings of my research, and provide you with insights into what is the role of talent management, and how it practices.
- Provide research finding report included suggestions for your further develop your talent management strategy.
- Keep good communication with your HR team, and provide outcomes of this study if they wish, and happy to discuss any other relevant topics you might be interested.

I would like to conduct in-depth interviews with members in your leadership, administration staffs, HR team and talent pool. Thus, I require to 20-25 participants, and each will be invited to a 60 mins recorded face-to-face or online interview. And they are expected to share their views on talent management and relevant topics.

The privacy of your organization and participants is of the highest priority. The name of your organization and the names of the respondence will be kept strictly confidential, and no reference won't identify your organization and participants. All the data that you and your participants will be stored safely, and accessed only by me researcher.

Please conder my invitation seriously, and I appreciate your solicitude, expect that is your to reply.

Yours sincerely,

Mengqiong Liu

尊敬的_____：

　　我诚挚的邀请贵单位参与一项关于中国高校人才管理的定性研究，这是本人博士研究项目的一部分。本研究的目的是考察人才管理在您的组织中的实施和贡献情况，讨论人才管理应如何与战略和组织文化相适应的问题。

　　本研究旨在提高提高对中国高校人才管理的认识，希望真实呈现中国高校人才管理的发展状态，探讨遭遇的问题及其成因，从高校组织与人才个体两个层面探讨其发展需求，厘清发展困境与问题根源，探寻中国高校特色的人才管理制度，帮助高校进行更有效的人才管理和高校发展。本研究将有助于提升管理人员和学者对人才管理的认识和理解，也将为您组织的决策者提供关于人才管理的新见解，从而有望更好地适应您组织的战略和文化，并实现进一步发展。

　　•与您分享和讨论我的研究发现，并为您提供关于人才管理的角色是什么，以及它如何实践的见解。

　　•提供研究发现报告，包括进一步发展人才管理战略的建议。

　　•与您的人力资源团队保持良好的沟通，并提供他们想要了解的研究成果。

　　我希望能够对贵校的领导层、行政人员、人力资源团队和人才库的成员进行深入访谈。我希望招募 20-25 名参与者，每个人将被邀请进行 60 分钟的面对面录音或在线采访，分享他们对人才管理和相关话题的看法。

　　我想说明的是，我将极力保证您和参与者的隐私安全。我将对机构名称和受访者名单严格保密，任何情形下都不会透露机构和参与者的身份，所有的数据也将被安全存储和保管，仅作为研究用途，仅我一个人对数据有使用权限。

请您认真考虑我的邀请，感谢您的关注，期待您的回复。

此致

敬礼

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刘梦琼

2020 年 6 月 13 日

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Appendix Two (A): Participants Information Sheet

（**version I, 2020-6-13**）

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刘梦琼
英国赫尔大学商学院博士研究生
Mengqiong Liu
PhD Candidate – Faculty Business, Law and Politics
The university of Hull, HU6 7RX, United Kindom
M: +447821269698; M: +8618695455106
E: m.liu-2018@hull.au.uk

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TALENT MANAGEMENT IN CHINESE UNIVERSITY CONTEXT
中国高校人才管理研究

Dear XXXX,

It is a great honor to invite your organization to take part in a qualitative research study conducted in partial fulfilment of my PhD research program. I would like to begin with a brief introduction to my research, and please take the time to read it and seriously consider my invitation.

The purpose of this research is to examine how Talent Management is implemented and contributes in your organization and how Talent Management fits with strategy and organizational culture.

You will be invited to participate in a 60 mins recorded interview. You are expected to share your opinions on talent management and how it works in your organization.

Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time before, during, or within one month after the interview. When you change your mind and withdraw this research, the data you provide will be destroyed and not used any more. However, after this point, the data will remain in this study. During the interview, if you feel uncomfortable about any questions, you can refuse to answer. In addition, if needed, a follow-up interview might be requested.

The privacy of your organization and participants is of the highest priority. The name of your organization and the names of the respondence will be kept strictly confidential, and no reference won't identify your organization and participants. All the data that you and your participants will be stored safely, and accessed only by me researcher.

If you wish to participate, a consent form will be required you to sign. And if you have any concerns or further questions, I am happy to respond, please do not hesitate to contact me either via email or scan the barcode here.

You might view a full research profile and the consent form by clicking on the following link: *https://weibo.com/1686207964*

Please note, due to Covid-safe procedures, face-to-face meeting is not mandatory. You can also choose Skype, wechat or Tencent Meeting.

扫一扫上面的二维码图案，加我微信

Looking forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours Sincerely,

Mengqiong Liu

尊敬的女士/先生，

您好，我非常荣幸地邀请贵单位参与一项关于中国高校人才管理的定性研究，这是我博士研究项目的一部分。首先请允许我简单介绍一下我的研究，感谢您抽出时间阅读，并请认真考虑我的邀请。

本研究的目的是考察人才管理在您的组织中的实施和贡献情况，讨论人才管理应如何与战略和组织文化相适应的问题。我希望邀请您参加一场 60 分钟的访谈，访谈是会被录音的。希望您能分享您对人才管理的看法，以及它是如何在你的组织中发挥作用的。

这项研究是自愿参与的，您可以在访谈前、访谈中或访谈后一个月内的任何时候退出。当您改变主意，并选择退出这项研究时，您提供的所有数据将被销毁，并不再被使用。然而，在访谈发生一个月后，数据将被保留在本研究中，不可撤回。在面试过程中，如果您对任何问题感到不适，可以拒绝回答。此外，如果需要，我可能会提出进行第二轮访谈的请求。

此外，我想说明的是，我将极力保证您和参与者的隐私安全。我将对机构名称和受访者名单严格保密，任何情形下都不会透露机构和参与者的身份，所有的数据也将被安全存储和保管，仅作为研究用途，仅我一个人对数据有使用权限。

如果您希望参与，您将需要签署一份同意书。如果您对我的研究或者访谈邀请有任何疑问，我很乐意能够回答，请通过电子邮件或扫描这里的条形码与我联系。

您也可以通过点击以下链接查看完整的研究资料和同意书:https://weibo.com/1686207964

请注意，针对防控安全考虑，并不强制面对面进行访谈，您也可以选择 Skype、微信或腾讯会议。

期待您的回复。

此致

敬礼

扫一扫上面的二维码图案，加我微信

刘梦琼

2020 年 6 月 13 日

Appendix Two (B): Participants Consent Form

（**version I, 2020-6-13**）

Title of Research Project:

TALENT MANAGEMENT OF UNIVERSITIES IN CHINA

项目名称：中国高校人才管理研究

It is important that you fully read, understand and sign the consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary. For information about the research, please see the Participant Information Sheet, or contact the researcher.

If you are satisfied that you understand the information, and happy to take part in this research, please complete this form. Thank you very much.

您必须完整阅读、理解并签署同意书，表示您参与这项研究完全是自愿的。有关本次研究的信息，请参阅研究信息表，或联系研究人员。

如果您已了解以上信息，并愿意参与本次研究，请填写此表格。 非常感谢。

I confirm that I have read and understood the Research Information Sheet (version I, 2020-6-13). 我确认我已经阅读并理解了研究信息表(版本 I，2020-6-13)。	☐
I consent to taking part in this the study. 我同意参加这项研究。	☐
I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time prior to the interview and during the interview. 我明白我有权在访谈前和访谈中随时退出研究。	☐
I understand that if I choose to withdraw within <u>one month</u> after the interview, all the data I provided will be destroyed and not used any more. And if it is beyond one month after the interview, the data will remain in the study and will be used by researcher. 我明白我有权在访谈结束后一个月内退出研究，届时我所提供的资料将会被销毁，并不再使用。 如果超过一个月，数据将留在研究中，被研究人员使用。	
I give permission for my words to be quoted (by use of coded number or pseudonym). 我允许我的话被引用(通过使用编码或笔名)。	☐
I understand that the interview will be recorded, and the information collected will be in kept secure conditions. 本人明白采访将会被记录下来，所收集的资料将会被妥善保管。	☐
I understand that no person other than the researcher will have access to the information provided. 本人明白除研究人员外，任何人不得接触我所提供的资料。	☐
I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the report and that no written information that could lead to my being identified will be included in any report.	☐

本人明白研究者会在报告中使用笔名保护本人的身分，并明白任何报告不会包含可能导致本人身分被识破的书面资料。	

If you are satisfied with this consent, please print and sign below. 请在下方打印并签名。

Participant 参与者	Researcher 研究者
Signature: _____	**Signature:** _____
Print name: _____	**Print name:** _____
Date: _____	**Date:** _____

One copy to be retained by the participant, and one copy to be retained by the researcher.

同意书参与者保留一份，研究人员保留一份 。

本人明白研究者会在报告中使用笔名保护本人的身分，并明白任何报告不会包含可能导致本人身分被识破的书面资料。

Appendix Three: Interview Outline

Talent Management in Chinese University Context

Aim of the project: The aim of the study is to provide insights on Talent Management (TM) in one of the key emerging economies (that of China), universities are selected as the research object because of the high concentration of talents. Different from traditional HRM, there are few relative researches in China at present, this research aims to explore some new concepts to improve the understanding of TM in Chinese university and contribute to revealing the context with Chinese characteristics. The following themes will be addressed and specific questions will be proposed to ask in each theme.

Theme A: Talent conceptualisations

The definition of talents in "Outline of the National Program for Medium and Long-term of Human Resource Development for 2010-2020" is the most widely used concept in China: talents are those who have certain professional knowledge and skills, engage in creative labour and make contributions to society, and they are the workers with high ability and quality in human resources. And according to the report of the 19th CPC national congress (2017), it is divided the talents into three categories, namely, knowledge-based talents, skill-based talents and innovation-based talents.

At present, there are many discussions on the connotation of talents in colleges and universities in China. Not only different levels of universities have different criteria for judging talents, but also different provinces have different definitions for talents' connotation. However, their core characteristics are all high academic qualifications, high professional titles and high contribution. Academic qualifications represent the level of education, and high academic qualifications generally refer to the academic qualifications of doctoral students. High professional titles represent working ability and professional level, and generally require professional titles above subtropical high. Outstanding achievements and significant contributions made by high-level representatives in this post.

Some Chinese researchers proposed the connotation and characteristics of talents in universities, Ding (2006) proposed that talents in universities are human resources with high academic qualifications, professional titles and academic attainments, strong creativity and more innovative achievements in the research field of this discipline, certain popularity among peers at home and abroad, and strong comprehensive strength. Xu (2007) proposed that the characteristics of high-level talents in colleges and universities are high academic qualifications, high professional titles, high level, high enterprising career, high creative scientific research, high scarce demand and high mobility of regions. Ou (2008) proposed that its group characteristics are two-dimensional expectation with professional purpose (social and self-expectation) , dynamic growth process and high mobility of individuals and groups. Li (2010) distinguishes talents in colleges and universities from two perspectives. Broadly speaking, it refers to all kinds of talents in the teaching staff. In a narrow sense, it refers to mental workers with higher knowledge attainments, innovative achievements in a certain discipline or field, and playing a leading role in teaching, scientific research and discipline development. However, this recognition is insufficient, static and one-sided.

Among which we note the following.

- What does "talent" mean for Chinese universities?

- What is the level of awareness and understanding of talent and talent management in universities in Chinese context?

- How important is talent for Chinese universities and their educational outcomes?

Theme B: Strategic approaches to TM / TM philosophies in Chinese universities

Universities are symbiotic with talents. To win the advantages of talents, universities have the preconditions to promote their endogenous talents training and discipline development, obtain exogenous competitive resources of higher education and carry out effective interaction and cooperation with society. Talent management is particularly important for universities, not only because universities are faced with the challenge of training innovative and imaginative talents to meet the needs and challenges of educational reform, but help achieve other strategic goals as well, such as building an efficient learning environment and adding value to the school brand, etc. It involves systematically attracting, identifying, developing, engaging, retaining and deploying talent (Scullion et al., 2010). Issues such as growing shortage of leadership skills, difficulties in promotion and difficult work-life balance are leading to a shortage of talent that can transform organisational performance.

Universities need to develop a talent pool and increase cooperation with other colleges and institutions to develop leadership, teaching and scientific research talents. This is very important for academic groups, so university talents should be given a more consistent development strategy, as well as job opportunities and comprehensive professional development opportunities in different academic groups, so as to systematically enhance the talent pool within the group.

In addition, one of the challenges facing talent management is to manage intergenerational differences in the workplace. Due to the different behaviors and attitudes of groups in the workplace, the responses to talent management practices will also be different, and the practice of talent management affects the psychological contract of all talents in different ways (Festing &Schafer, 2014), especially for new generation. Different preferences and expectations of the new generation will lead to increased interest in talent management, and talent management practice is that organizations will increase their commitment to retain the most valuable but less loyal employees in order to meet personal expectations. For colleges and universities, it is insufficient to attract potential talents. There must also be a system to manage their talents, maintain the commitment of talents through process support, and properly take good advantage of their abilities. Therefore, a key challenge is to figure out how does talent management fit with strategy and organizational culture.

Among which we note the following.

- What kind of HRM and TM strategic approaches do Chinese universities apply (e.g.

inclusive vs exclusive, emphasis on acquisition or buying talent)?

● Which are the underlying values in their TM approaches?

● What is the degree of TM policy formalisation?

(interview questions 7-10)

Theme C: TM Practices

Beyond the conceptualisation of talent, and the overarching strategies employed, we aim to understand how Chinese universities practically manage talent in terms of identification, attraction, motivation, development and retention.

In talent management, resources are dispersed to various activity fields adapted to the talent management system. In this way of system integration, talent management could be closer to organizational strategy, and it could be easier to realize the complementarity of talent planning and business planning, as well as the close integration of people and strategy. Therefore, talent management is not isolated, but keeps continuous contact with other strategies and processes of the organization, and even everyone's practical activities. It can be seen as a strategic competitive advantage rather than a standard tool for human resource processes. It is equally important to measure and evaluate the process and results of talent management. The right talents should be in the right position, who serve the organization with skills, dedication and best efforts, and establish rules and orders.

Universities are not only carrying out teaching-oriented educational activities in a closed campus environment, the opening of the campus enables them to truly move towards the center of economy and society. The same is true for talents. It is of great significance to form rational flow of talents through benign competition mechanism, to realize the integration of university talent resources and enhance the overall strength of talents through a perfect talent information sharing mechanism which is composed of academic cooperation, project consultation and many other ways. However, when universities do not hesitate to spend a lot of money in order to "poaching" talents, the long-term training of their young teachers get overlooked, resulting in low output efficiency of young excellent teachers.

Therefore, we note following.

● How is talent identified, attracted, managed, and retained in Chinese universities?

● Which are the main practices employed in each domain?

● What are the main issues / barriers / challenges relating to the attraction, motivation, development and retention of talents in Chinese universities?

● Which are the main gender issues in Chinese universities?

Theme D: Internal and external factors affecting TM practices in Chinese universities

As an institutionalized organization, universities are affected by institutional environment, social ethics and many other aspects during their operation. For the flow of talents in colleges and universities, it is also subject to the current policy influence, evaluation mechanism, competition mechanism and other factors.

For example, policy impact, the promotion of double first-class construction provides an opportunity for the introduction of talents, the strengthening of school-running strength and the improvement of education level. Evaluation mechanism impact, relying on "title" to dig talents, resulting in talent flow presents a certain utilitarian tendency. And in the process of talent introduction, the lack of full consideration of the actual development of the university, might result in the out-of-balance between demand for education and talent. In addition, talent evaluation still exists "paper-centric" vicious circle. Ethic impact, the orderly flow of talents in universities cannot be separated from the benign system as a guarantee, and at the same time cannot break away from the soft constraint of informal system. Competition ethics, as a kind of soft competition constraint of moral level, depends on the internal consciousness and self-restraint of the competition subject. There could be many other factors.

Therefore, we note following.

- Which are the internal factors that shape TM practices in Chinese universities?

- How does organizational strategy affect the approach to managing talents?

- What are the links between talent management and other areas of management, like performance management, rewards management, etc.

- To what extent do TM issues and challenges vary in different stages of the organization.

- Which are the external factors that shape TM practices in Chinese universities?

- How do social reputation forces affect TM practices?

Theme E: The perspective of talents in Chinese universities

There are many reasons for talents to serve universities in numerous choices. With modest incomes, they could make a decent living, and there are a lot of possible reasons: respected, vacation days, less socializing, more free time, less work pressure and access to some educational resources.

However, the metaphor "between the ivory tower and the academic assembly line" might better describe the plight of many young teachers in universities.

Some of them hold the ideal of "pursuing academic career", but face the reality that they have to stay up all night to produce academic achievements and struggle to avoid transferring jobs or losing their jobs. The term "insomnia in academia" is not too strong a word for young

teachers trying to "get ashore" at the moment, because the institutional environment of the academic profession in which they work is characterized by an excessive emphasis on productivity, which is measured as output per unit of time, therefore, talents often have to deal with time pressure by sacrificing their health and taking up leisure time.

Increasing work pressure, job burnout and mental health problems of teachers in universities caused by the intensified career competition. Under the pressure of performance assessment, many scholars have to improve the speed of academic production and reduce the quality of academic output by chasing "hot spots", and practicing fraud. Why does the institutional environment of academic profession make the measures to stimulate academic production become the main source of time pressure for teachers? Many studies believe that the global academic labor market is influenced by academic capitalism and managerialism, which leads to the differentiation of internal employment conditions, increases the instability of academic career, and intensifies the competitive pressure, thus leading to the gradual normalization of anxiety-driven overwork. In terms of understanding the actual situation, the explanatory power of this perspective is insufficient.

In China, administrative forces dominate resource allocation and policy making in the academic labor market. Administrative logic is essentially bureaucratic management logic, which mainly sets goals for subjects at all levels through administrative instructions. It may be reflected in the difference between different organizations in the implementation of policies such as "up or go", or in the difference of quantitative evaluation standards and variation frequency of universities, etc. The contradiction between administrative logic and academic logic increases the time pressure of scholars.

Based on this, we note the following points

- From an individual perspective, what are the main issues relating to the attraction, motivation, development and retention of talents in your university?

- Why do talented people join a university? Why did you choose this university?

- What are the expectations of talents in your university? What expectations do you feel?

- How do talents view their career development and progression in the university? What are your personal plans?

Questions for Leadership

1. What is the level of awareness and understanding of talent management?对人才管理的认识和理解程度如何?

2. How important is organizational culture for the approach to managing talents?组织文化对于管理人才的方法有多重要?

3. How is talent defined and identified? 人才是如何定义和识别的?

4. What are the main issues relating to the attraction, motivation, development and retention of talents?吸引、激励、发展和留住人才的主要问题是什么?

    a) organizational perspective

    b) individual perspective

5. What are the expectations of talents? 对人才的期望是什么?

6. What are the roles and competences of talents and what is the scope of the tasks performed? 人才的角色和能力是什么?所执行任务的范围是什么?

7. How do internal and external factors shape TM practices? 内部和外部因素是如何影响TM 实践的?

8. What factors make attracting and recruiting talent more complex and difficult? 哪些因素使吸引和招聘人才变得更加复杂和困难?

9. What are the main barriers to introducing TM practices?引入 TM 实践的主要障碍是什么?

10. What is the impact of TM practices on the growth and effectiveness of university?TM 实践对大学的成长和效率有什么影响?

11. To what extent do talent practices vary in different type of unit?在不同业务单位中，人才实践的差异有多大?

12. To what extent do talent issues and challenges vary in different stages of the organizational development?在组织发展的不同阶段，人才问题和挑战有多大程度的不同?

13. Internal & external acquisition of talents ; talents and career development; retention practices? impact of talent approach on business outcomes ?其他问题——内部或外部引进人才; 人才与职业发展; 保留的做法吗? 人才策略对业务结果的影响?

14. What are the main differences between your university and others in terms of their overall approach to management of human resources and to the management of talent ? 在人力资源管理和人才管理的总体方法上，贵学校和其他学校有什么主要区别?

15. Any opinions or suggestions on other aspects of talent management your university, such as talent attraction, training, scientific research management, working environment, incentive mechanism, etc.对目前高校人才管理的其他各方面，如人才引进、培训、科研管理、工作环境、激励机制等方面，有何意见或建议?

Questions for Administration

1. Do you have a formal HR or TM policy? If so, could you please briefly tell me about it? 是否有正式的人事或人才管理政策? 如果有，能否简单介绍一下?

2. Could you describe your overall approach to managing people?你能描述一下人员管理的总体方法吗?

3. Do you employ an HR professional?你雇佣了人力资源专家吗?

4. What are the reasons employees choose to work here?员工选择在这里工作的原因是什么?

5. What are the reasons people stay with XX University?人们留在 XX 大学的原因是什么?

6. How do your university define talent? 你们学校是如何定义人才的?

7. Who are considered talents in your organization?在你的组织中，谁被认为是人才?

8. What does it take to be considered a talent?怎样才能被认为是人才?

Do you see everybody as talent? If not, do you manage talents differently? How?你认为每个人都是人才吗? 如果没有，你会以不同的方式管理人才吗? 如何?

9. who are seen as more valuable than most ?谁被认为比大多数人更有价值?

10. What are your main challenges in relation to talent issues?在人才问题上，你面临的主要挑战是什么?

11. What are the peculiar factors that may influence the approach to HR and TM ? 有哪些特殊的因素可能会影响到人力资源和人才管理方法?

12. Do you operate with an inclusive or exclusive approach to TM? 你对 TM 采取的是包容性的还是排他性的方法?

13. How does your talent issues change in relation to changes in the business?人才问题是如何随着业务的变化而变化的?

14. Do you have informal practices which help you attract, retain and develop staff?你是否有非正式的做法来帮助你吸引、留住和发展员工?

15. What are the main factors influencing the retention of talent?影响人才保留的主要因素是什么?

16. How will talent management policies change in the future?未来人才管理政策会有什么改变?

17. Was source of income a factor in differentiation of universities......those with a high proportion of income coming from research v those with a high proportion of income coming from teaching..........this would influence talent strategy?

Questions for Talent Pool

1. How long have you been working here? (current occupation and position and previous, if any) 你在这里工作多久了？(目前及以前的职业和职位，如有)

2. Why did you choose to work here? 你为什么选择在这里工作？

3. What do you see as positive and negative aspects of working here from an employee perspective? 从员工的角度来看，你认为在这里工作的优点和缺点是什么？

4. How about your career?你的事业怎么样? How satisfied are you with your own development? 您对自身的发展状况满意度如何？

5. Why do you stay with XX university? 你为什么留在 XX 大学？

6. What motivates you ? What is the purpose of your hard work? 你的动力是什么?您努力工作的目的是什么？

7. To what extent are your expectations met? From the perspective of your own development, what do you think you need most? What ways can you better promote your career development? 你的期望达到了什么程度? 从自身发展角度出发，您认为自己最需要什么？ 通过什么样的途径才能更好地促进自己的职业发展？

8. What do you think is the biggest obstacle to your own development? 您认为影响自身发展的最大障碍是什么？

9. Do you think some people are considered by your organization as talents? If so, why do you think that's the case? 你认为有些人被你的组织认为是人才吗? 如果是这样，你认为为什么会这样？

10. In your own opinion, what does it take to be considered a talent? What are the main aspects to be included? 在你看来，怎样才能被认为是人才呢? 应包括哪些主要方面？

11. Do you feel talents in your organization are being managed or treated differently compared to others? Why? How?你是否觉得公司里的人才受到了不同的管理或待遇? 如果是，是怎么回事? 如果没有，你认为他们应该是吗? 为什么? 如何？

12. Have you ever considered leaving your job? If there is an opportunity to make another choice, what do you think are the main factors that attract you?假如有机会流动，您认为人才被吸引到其他工作岗位的主要因素是什么？

13. source of income? a high proportion of income coming from research OR a high proportion of income coming from teaching?

Appendix Four: Ethics Approval Documents

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

FORM D – Staff, Post Graduate Students, and UG Dissertations

(Involving human participants)</td></tr>
</table>

Please read each question carefully, taking note of instructions and completing all parts. If a question is not applicable please indicate so. Where a question asks for information which you have previously provided in answer to another question, please refer to your earlier answer rather than repeating information.

Ethics reference number (for office use):	
WorkTribe project URL	

PART A: SUMMARY	

A.1 Title of the research

Talent Management of Universities in China

A.2 Principal investigator's contact details	
Name *(Title, first name, surname)*	Ms. Mengqiong Liu
Position	PhD student
Faculty/School	Faculty of Business, Law and Politics
Telephone number	07821269698
University of Hull email address	m.liu-2018@hull.au.uk

A.3 To be completed by students only	
Qualification working towards (e.g. Masters, PhD, ClinPsyD)	PhD
Student number	201850227
Supervisor's name (Title, first name, surname)	Prof. Hugh Scullion
Faculty/ School	Faculty of Business, Law and Politics
Supervisor's telephone number	07968428539
Supervisor's email address	H.Scullion@hull.ac.uk

A.4 Other relevant members of the research team (e.g. co-investigators, co-supervisors)	
Name *(Title, first name, surname)*	
Position	
Faculty/ School	
Telephone number	
Institution	

Email address	

Name (Title, first name, surname)	
Position	
Faculty/ School	
Telephone number	
Email address	

A.5 Select from the list below to describe your research: (Mark with X all that apply)

X	Research on or with human participants
X	Research working with data of human participants
X	New data collected by qualitative methods
	New data collected by quantitative methods
	New data collected from observing individuals or populations
X	Routinely collected data or secondary data
	Research working with aggregated or population data
X	Research using already published data or data in the public domain
X	Research involving discussion of sensitive topics or topics that could be considered sensitive
	Research using confidential data
	Prolonged or frequent participant involvement
	Research involving members of the public in a research capacity (participant research)
X	Research conducted outside the UK
	Research involving accessing social media sites
	Research involving accessing or encountering security sensitive material
	Research involving accessing websites or material associated with extreme or terrorist communities
	Research involving storing or transmitting any material that could be interpreted as sympathetic, endorsing or promoting terrorist acts
	Research involving financial inducements for participants (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time)

PART B: THE RESEARCH

B.1 Give a short summary of the research (max 300 words)

*This section must be completed in **language comprehensible to the lay person**. Your answers should be easily understood by someone who is not experienced in the field you are researching, (eg a member of the public) - otherwise it may be returned to you. Where technical terms are used they should be explained. Any acronyms not generally known should be described in full. Do not simply reproduce or refer to the research method or protocol, although these can also be submitted to provide any technical information that you think the ethics committee may require. This section should cover the main parts of the proposal.*

In plain English provide a brief summary of the aims and objectives of the research.
- The summary should briefly describe the background to the research and why it is important,
- the questions it will answer and potential benefits,
- the study design and what is involved for participants.

The aim of the study is to provide insights on Talent Management (TM) in one of the key emerging economies (that of China), universities are selected as the research object because of the high concentration of talents. Different from traditional HRM, there are few relative researches in China at present, this research aims to develop certain theoretical and practical significance for enriching relevant talent theories, promoting rational talent introduction, talent retention, talent development as well as other relevant talent management, explore some new concepts to improve the understanding of TM in Chinese university and contribute to revealing the context with Chinese characteristics.
First, second-hand information from relevant literature, university reports and previous studies will be reviewed to understand the situation of talent management in Chinese context as well as the development of talent management in universities in China. The theoretical research will be conducted, and relevant theories will be discussed or introduced to develop the theory of talent management. Then, case study research will be adopted to focus on the talent management strategy of Chinese universities and answer to the research questions. Two representative universities are selected as main unit of analysis, and in each case, data will be mined deeply.
Participants include academic leadership, academic talent pool, administration, and most important people to help.

B.2 Proposed study dates and duration

Research start date (DD/MM/YY): _10/10/2018_____   Research end date (DD/MM/YY): ___16/09/2023____

Fieldwork start date (DD/MM/YY): _20/06/2022_____ _ Fieldwork end date (DD/MM/YY): ____20/09/2022____

B.3 Where will the research be undertaken? (i.e. in the street, on University of Hull premises, in schools, on-line etc.)
 On-line
Do you have permission to conduct the research on the premises?

| X | Yes | | | No |

If no, please describe how this will be addressed.

B.4 Does the research involve any risks to the researchers themselves, or people not directly involved in the research? *E.g. lone working*

| | Yes | | X | No |

If yes, please describe and say how these will be addressed (include reference to relevant lone working policies): _____

If yes, please include a copy of your completed risk assessment form with your application.

NB: If you are unsure whether a risk assessment is required visit the Health and Safety SharePoint site. Risk assessments are required for all fieldwork taking place off campus.

B.5 What are the main ethical issues with the research and how will these be addressed?
Indicate any issues on which you would welcome advice from the ethics committee

(1) Informed participation
Before interview, I introduced the research content and purpose to respondents as much as possible and obtained the written consent to ensure the voluntary participation of the respondents. At the beginning of the interview, I informed them of the right to refuse or drop out the interview at any time, as well as the right to refuse to answer any questions.
(2) Disclosure information.
The researchers have the responsibility to carefully handle the personal and confidential data from participants, and prevent data from leakage, and never let your participant concern about privacy, data theft, data leaks, and data loss. I separated interview transcriptions from the names of respondents to protect the identities of the subjects; and I established a numbering system to protect their privacy rights. At the same time, the list of interviewees is stored in a safe place for researchers to use only. For some identity-sensitive information provided by interviewees, protective measures are taken not to disclose relevant information to anyone. After the study, the list was destroyed to implement the principle of anonymity and confidentiality.
Ethical Conduct:
--Inform participants in advance.
--Always get consent, although it is just a little piece of thing.

B.6 Does the research involve an international collaborator or research conducted overseas:

X	Yes			No

If yes, describe any ethical review procedures that you will need to comply with in that country:

Sign the commitment of scientific research integrity.

Describe the measures you have taken to comply with these:

I have signed the commitment of scientific research integrity, obtained the consent from the president office and the publicity department of the case university, have fully presented my research plan and goals and submitted the research introduction and plan to them for filing, and have committed to accept ethical review at any time.
And I promised I would not disclose the name of the case university in the thesis. For school documents, only analyze and use the data provided by them and can be made public, and do not collect and use other confidential information.

Include copies of any ethical approval letters/ certificates with your application.
Copy of the signed commitment of scientific research integrity

科研诚信承诺书

本人承诺在科研项目（课题）实施（包括项目申请、评估评审、检查、执行、资源汇交、验收等过程）中，遵守科学道德和诚信要求，严格执行项目（课题）管理规定和任务书中的约定，不发生下列科研不端行为：

（一） 在职称、简历以及研究基础等方面提供虚假信息；

（二） 抄袭、剽窃他人科研成果；

（三） 捏造和篡改科研数据；

（四） 违法医学伦理；在设计人体研究中，违反知情同意、保护隐私等规定；

（五） 不按时完成科研项目；违反科研经费管理相关规定；

（六） 其他科研不端行为。

项目负责人签字：刘楚琼

项目参与人签字：刘楚琼

日期： 2021.6.2

PART C: HUMAN PARTCIPANTS AND SUBJECTS

C.1 Who are the participants?

Academic leadership, academic talent pool, administration, most important people to help.

C.2 Are the participants expected to be from any of the following groups? (Mark with X as appropriate)

	Children under 16 years old. *Specify age group:* _____
	Adults with learning disabilities
	Adults with other forms of mental incapacity or mental illness
	Adults in emergency situations
	Prisoners or young offenders
	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator, e.g. members of staff, students
	Other vulnerable groups
X	No participants from any of the above groups

Include in Section D5 details of extra steps taken to assure their protection.

Does your research require you to have a DBS check?

	Yes	X	No

It is the researcher's responsibility to check whether a DBS check (or equivalent) is required and to obtain one if it is needed. See also http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/agencies-public-bodies/dbs

C.3 What are the potential benefits and/ or risks for research participants in both the short and medium-term?
Risks may include health and safety, physical harm and emotional well-being

Well beings of participants
The involved participants in this research are expected to define talents, and give personal experience, background, and achievement on teaching, research, instruct students and how they serve the local, and so on, and the topic of talents, salary, welfare, rewards, personal development, working satisfactory, working pressures is a touchy subject which is susceptible to discomfort.

What will be done to avoid or minimise the risks?
Possible ways to reduce discomfort and harm:
--Show great welcome and respect.
--Comfortable and private area.
--Create a better atmosphere when interviewing.
--Make an emotional connection.
--Encourage participants properly.
--Avoid awkward pause.
--Subtle topic control.
--Avoid overreach and invade the privacy of participants.
--Never coerce people into providing information or taking part.
Additional, recordings must be allowed by all the participants, otherwise it will make people conceal the facts, feel embarrassed, annoyed, or even quit the interview directly. Still, the recording process can make interviewees uncomfortable.

C.4 Is there a potential for criminal or other disclosures to the researcher requiring action to take place during the research? (e.g. during interviews/group discussions, or use of screen tests for drugs?)

| | Yes | X | No |

If yes, please describe and say how these will be addressed:

C.5 What will participants be asked to do in the study? *(e.g. number of visits, time involved, travel required, interviews)*
1-2 online interviews, about 1 hour at a time

PART D: RECRUITMENT & CONSENT PROCESSES

How participants are recruited is important to ensure that they are not induced or coerced into participation. The way participants are identified may have a bearing on whether the results can be generalised. Explain each point and give details for subgroups separately if appropriate. Also say who will identify, approach and recruit participants. Remember to include all advertising material (posters, emails etc) as part of your application.

D.1 Describe how potential participants in the study be identified, approached and recruited and who will do this:
(i) identified:
Selected interviewees meet the following criteria: ①People who have experience of the university and be familiar with the situation of the university and the organizational context; ②People who are involved in either designing, managing, or implementing talent management, or people who are defined by the organization and are included in the talent management program; ③People who have the willingness, interest and enough time to participate in this study.
(ii) approached:
Start from HR department, and ask them to recommend suitable candidates, and then send out invitation.
(iii) recruited:
Invitation Letter. Wechat scan code invitation.

D.2. Do you intend to identify participants by name? If yes, explain why

No

D.3 Will the research involve any element of deception?

| | Yes | X | No |

If yes, please describe why this is necessary and whether participants will be informed at the end of the study.

D.4 Will informed consent be obtained from the research participants?

| X | Yes | | No |

If yes, __give details__ of how it will be done. Give details of any particular steps to provide information (in addition to a written information sheet) e.g. videos, interactive material. If you are not going to be obtaining informed consent you will need to justify this.
Sign informed consent.
The research will be explained again before the interview, and the interview will begin after the recording is agreed.

If participants are to be recruited from any of potentially vulnerable groups, __give details of extra steps__ taken to assure their protection. Describe any arrangements to be made for obtaining consent from a legal representative.

Copies of any written consent form, questionnaire, written information and all other explanatory material should accompany this application. The information sheet should make explicit that participants can withdraw from the research at any time, if the research design permits. Remember to use meaningful file names and version control to make it easier to keep track of your documents.

D.5 Describe whether participants will be able to withdraw from the study, and up to what point (e.g. if data is to be anonymised). If withdrawal is __not__ possible, explain why not.
Any limits to withdrawal, e.g. once the results have been written up or published, should be made clear to participants in advance, preferably by specifying a date after which withdrawal would not be possible. Make sure that the information provided to participants (e.g. information sheets, consent forms) is consistent with the answer to D6.

Participants will be able to withdraw from the study before the interview begins or during the interview.
And also, participants will be able to withdraw after the interview, but in the informed consent, I will inform the interviewees that they can still withdraw at any time within one month after the interview. I will no longer use any information and data provided by them, and I promise to delete all the records. However, after one month, they will not be able to withdraw any more, and I will remind them when it's time.

D.6 Will individual or group interviews/ questionnaires discuss any topics or issues that might be sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting, or is it possible that criminal or other disclosures that require action (for instance, pertaining to child protection) could take place during the study (e.g. during interviews or group discussions)? *The information sheet should explain under what circumstances action may be taken.*

| X | Yes | | | No |

If yes, give details of procedures in place to deal with these issues.

When it comes to sensitive topics, such as income, promotion and stress etc., I will announce it in advance and tell them they can choose not to answer if they feel uncomfortable.

D.7 Will individual research participants receive any payments, fees, reimbursement of expenses or any other incentives or benefits for taking part in this research?

| | Yes | | X | No |

If Yes, please describe the amount, number and size of incentives and on what basis this was decided.

PART E: RESEARCH DATA

Please read http://libguides.hull.ac.uk/researchdata

E.1 Explain what measures will be put in place to protect personal data. E.g. anonymisation procedures and coding of data. Any potential for re-identification should be made clear to participants in advance.

I will anonymize the real names of all participants, and coding each interviewee. In the process of analyzing data and thesis writing-up, I will distinguish interviewees by the coded numbers, and be careful to hide names or other confidential information that may appear in the transcript. In addition, I will keep all the original data properly, keep them in a special folder and encrypt them. And I will make a confidentiality commitment to each participant and explain how the data will be stored.

E.2 Does the research involve sensitive topics or confidential data? If yes, explain.

The involved participants in this research are expected to give personal experience, background, and insights on teaching, research, and talent policies, and so on, and it might involve income, promotion, personal development, working satisfactory, working pressures which is a sensitive topic which is susceptible to discomfort.

E.3. What security measures are place to ensure secure storage of data at any stage of the research?

Provide details on where personal data will be stored, any of the following: (mark with X all that apply)

X	University approved cloud computing services
	Other cloud computing services
X	Manual files
	Private company computers
	Portable devices
	Home or other personal computers (not recommended; data should be stored on a Univ~~e~~ server such as your G,T, X or Z: drive where it is secure and backed up regularly).

Please attach the data management plan in the appendices; for further information visit http://libguides.hull.ac.uk/researchdata

---

E.4 Who will have access to participant's personal data during the study?
Researcher Only

E.5 Where will the data generated by the research be analysed and by whom?

By hand and Nvivo. By researcher.

E.6 Who will have access and act as long term custodian for the research data generated by the study?

Researcher, and supervisory

E.7 Have all researchers that have access to the personal data that will be collected as part

X	Yes			No

of the research study, completed the University (or equivalent) data protection training?

It is mandatory that all researchers accessing personal data have completed data protection training prior to commencing the research.
https://share.hull.ac.uk/Services/StaffDevelopment/SitePages/eLearning%20-%20Courses.aspx

E.8 Will the research involve any of the following activities at any stage (including identification of potential research participants)? (Select all that apply)

- [ ] Examination of personal records by those who would not normally have access
- [ ] Access to research data on individuals by people from outside the research team
- [ ] Electronic surveys, please specify survey tool: _____
- [ ] Other electronic transfer of data
- [X] Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, e-mails or telephone numbers
- [X] Use of audio/ visual recording devices (NB this should usually be mentioned in the information participants)

E.9 Are there any reasons to prevent or delay the publication of this research? E.g. Commercial embargoes, sensitive material.

[ ] Yes   [X] No

If yes, provide details:

E.10 If there are restrictions on where this research should be published or reported, Where will the results of this study be disseminated ? (Select all that apply)

- [ ] Conference presentation
- [ ] Peer reviewed journals
- [X] Publication as an eThesis in the Institutional repository HYDRA
- [ ] Publication on website
- [ ] Other publication or report, please state: _____
- [ ] Submission to regulatory authorities
- [ ] Other, please state: _____.
- [ ] No plans to report or disseminate the results

E.11 How long will research data from the study be stored?

[5] Years

E.12 When will the personal data collected during the study be destroyed and how?

When the study is completely over, the personal data will be destroyed thoroughly by crush folders.

Researchers must comply with the General Data Protection Regulations that are live from May 2018.

PART F: CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

F.1 Will any of the researchers or their institutions receive any other benefits or incentives for taking part in this research over and above normal salary or the costs of undertaking the research?

[ ] Yes   [X] No

If yes, indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided

F.2 Is there scope for any other conflict of interest? *For example, could the research findings affect any ongoing relationship between any of the individuals or organisations involved and the researcher(s)? Will the research funder have control of publication of research findings?*

| | Yes | X | No |

If so, please describe this potential conflict of interest, and outline what measures will be taken to address any ethical issues that might arise from the research.

F.3 Does the research involve external funding? (Tick as appropriate)

| | Yes | X | No |

If yes, what is the source of this funding? _____

PART I: DECLARATIONS

Declaration by Principal Investigator

1 The information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

2. I take full responsibility for the information I have supplied in this document.

3. I undertake to abide by the University's ethical and health and safety guidelines, and the ethical principles underlying good practice guidelines appropriate to my discipline.

4. I will seek the relevant School Risk assessment/COSHH approval if required.

5. If the research is approved, I undertake to adhere to the project protocol, the terms of this application and any conditions set out by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

6. Before implementing substantial amendments to the protocol, I will submit an amendment request to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee seeking approval.

7. If requested, I will submit progress reports.

8. I am aware of my responsibility to be up to date and comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of participants or other personal data, including the need to register when necessary with the appropriate Data Protection Officer.

9. I understand that research records/data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future.

10. I take full responsibility for the actions of the research team and individuals supporting this study, thus all those involved will be given training relevant to their role in the study.

11. By signing the validation I agree that the Faculty Research Ethics Committee, on behalf of the University of Hull, will hold personal data in this application and this will be managed according to the principles established in the Data protection Act (1998).

Sharing information for training purposes: Optional – please mark with X as appropriate:

I would be content for members of other Research Ethics Committees to have access to the information in the application in confidence for training purposes. All personal identifiers and references to researchers, funders and research units would be removed.

Principal Investigator

Signature of Principal Investigator:
(This needs to be an actual signature rather than just typed. Electronic signatures are acceptable)

Print name: ...加振涛.............................. Date:
(dd/mm/yyyy): .....10/06/2022..............................

Reviewer

Signature of Reviewer:
(This needs to be an actual signature rather than just typed. Electronic signatures are acceptable)

Print name: .... Date:
(dd/mm/yyyy): ....

Supervisor of UG and PG student research: I have read, edited and agree with the form above.

Supervisor's signature:........... *Hugh Scullion* ....
 (This needs to be an actual signature rather than just typed. Electronic signatures are acceptable)

Print name: ......Hugh Scullion..   Date:
    (dd/mm/yyyy): ....27/06/2022...

Remember to include any supporting material such as your participant information sheet, consent form, interview questions and recruitment material with your application. Version control should be adopted to include the version number and date on relevant documents in the appendices.

<div align="center">

These should be pasted as Appendices to this form.
Multiple documents will not be accepted.

</div>

One copy of the form should be kept by the researcher, one copy should be retained by the Ethics Officer and one copy should be sent by email to fblp-researchadmin@hull.ac.uk

Appendix Five: Participant Details

Participants Details, P University

Participants	Interview Type (VC or F2F)	Role and Responsibilities	Professional Title/ Administrative Level	Year of Working	Case Experience	Involvement with TM
Uni.P-AD-HR-01	VC	Complete the entire recruitment process based on the job vacancies and specific requirements reported by every department, and manage personnel files	Administration staff	12	Talent identification, attraction and recruitment	Implementation and design
Uni.P-AD-HR-02	VC	Responsible for professional title promotion and new teacher training	Administration staff	9	Talent development	Implementation
Uni.P-LE-DE-03	F2F	In charge of development planning department	Vice-president	27	Strategy and HRM	Strategy and design
Uni.P-TP-YT-04	VC	Scientific research and teaching	Tenure-track post	3	Tenure-track system; professional promotion; talent development	Participant
Uni.P-TP-YT-05	VC	Scientific research	Tenure-track post	1	Tenure-track system; Talent attraction	Participant
Uni.P-TP-PR-06	VC	Scientific research, teaching and tutoring	Professor	18	TM system change	Participant
Uni.P-AD-OS-07	VC	Responsible for carrying out the practice of TM in School	Administrative staff	7	Specific affairs of TM	Implementation
Uni.P-TP-RL-08	VC	Responsible for discipline development, Scientific research, teaching and tutoring	Professor	23	Talent pool	Implementation; Design
Uni.P-AD-SL-	VC	Promote the development and innovation	School leader;	25	Talent identification,	Strategy; Design

09		of the School, and formulate and implement the strategic plan of the School	Professor		attraction, retention, motivation, development; Talent pool	
Uni.P-TP-HP-10	VC	Scientific research, teaching and tutoring	Associate Professor	7	Tenure-track system; talent development; talent retention	Participant
Uni.P-TP-PT-11	VC	Teaching	Lecturer	3	Classification management; Talent development	Participant
Uni.P-TP-YT-12	VC	Scientific research	Tenure-track post	2	Tenure-track system; performance management	Participant
Uni.P-TP-PR-13	VC	Scientific research, teaching and tutoring	Professor	15	TM system change; Talent retention	Participant
Uni.P-TP-IT-14	VC	Scientific research	Distinguished professor	12	Talent attraction, retention and performance assessment	Participant
Uni.P-AD-CH-15	VC	Decision-making in the Academic Committee	Professor	19	Talent identification, talent development, professional promotion	Implementation, Participant
Uni.P-TP-RL-16	VC	Responsible for the scientific research team	Professor	10	Tenure-track system, talent development, talent pool	Implementation, Participant
Uni.P-AD-DH-17	VC	Responsible for HRM department	Section chief	21	Whole TM system and process	Design, Implementation
Uni.P-TP-HP-18	VC	Scientific research	Associate Professor	6	Tenure-track system; talent attraction, development and retention	Participant
Uni.P-TP-YT-19	F2F	Scientific research, teaching	Tenure-track post	4	Tenure-track system; talent development	Participant

Uni.P-TP-YT-20	VC	Scientific research	Tenure-track post	1	Tenure-track system; talent development	Participant

Participants Details, N University

Participants	Interview Type (VC or F2F)	Role and Responsibilities	Professional Title/ Administrative Level	Year of Working	Case experience	Involvement with TM
Uni.N-AD-HR-01	F2F	Hiring qualified candidates to fill vacant positions within the university	Administration staff	6	Talent attraction, recruitment, identification	Implementation; design
Uni.N-AD-OS-02	F2F	Secretary to the vice president, and assist him in collaborating with other senior manager to develop and implement human resources policies and strategies	Administration staff	7	TM policy	Strategy, design
Uni.N-TP-PR-03	F2F	Scientific research, teaching and tutoring	Professor	15	Performance points system; Talent retention	Participant
Uni.N-TP-PR-04	F2F	Scientific research, teaching and tutoring; Participate in university HRM consulting	Professor	36	Performance points system; talent identification	Participant; design
Uni.N-TP-IT-05	VC	Scientific research, teaching and tutoring	Professor	7	Performance points system; Talent retention and development	Participant
Uni.N-AD-CH-06	F2F	Scientific research, teaching and tutoring; Participate in the work of academic committee	Professor	29	Talent identification, Performance points system	Implementation; Participant
Uni.N-AD-	F2F	Develop the strategic plan to ensure that	Dean	22	Talent identification,	Strategy; Design

SL-07		the school can effectively achieve its goals and mission			attraction, retention and development	
Uni.N-LE-DE-08	F2F	Manage administrative work, and assist the principal in formulating, implementing, and supervising various policies, plans, and regulations related to faculty management and development	Vice-president	31	Development planning	Strategy; Design
Uni.N-TP-TT-09	VC	Responsible for the development of the university's international cooperation programs; international student teaching	Lecturer	15	Talent development; Internationalization development	Participant
Uni.N-TP-TT-10	F2F	Responsible for MBA administrative affairs; teaching and research	Lecturer	8	Talent retention and development	Participant
Uni.N-TP-HP-11	F2F	Responsible for the scientific research of the School of Economics and Management	Deputy dean; Associate professor	9	Allocation of scientific research tasks	Implementation
Uni.N-TP-YT-12	F2F	Scientific research and teaching	Lecturer	1	Talent attraction, introduction and development; Performance points system	Participant
Uni.N-TP-YT-13	F2F	Scientific research and teaching; Scientific research secretary	Associate professor	3	Talent attraction, retention and development; Performance points system	Participant
Uni.N-TP-RL-14	VC	Scientific research, teaching and tutoring; Scientific research leading talent	Professor	19	Talent retention, talent development; title and rewards	Participant
Uni.N-AD-HR-15	F2F	Responsible for developing and implementing teacher development plans, training and professional development for newly hired teachers	Administration staff	11	Talent development	Implementation; Design

Uni.N-LE-SE-16	F2F	Responsible for promoting the party's work of the university, responsible for promoting national policies and the guiding ideology of the party, conducting ideological and value education, etc.	Deputy Secretary of CPC	28	Talent policy and strategy	Strategy; Design
Uni.N-TP-KM-17	F2F	Scientific research, teaching and tutoring; Responsible for International education; Outstanding education background;	Lecturer	10	Talent attraction and talent development; Performance points system	Participant
Uni.N-TP-YT-18	F2F	Scientific research and teaching	Lecturer	3	Talent attraction and talent development; Performance points system	Participant
Uni.N-TP-PT-19	F2F	Specially recruited talent for particular background and ethnicity group; Manage minority students	Lecturer	3	Talent recruitment, talent development	Participant
Uni.N-20	F2F	Lead the most innovative and controversial school in the performance points system	Dean; Professor	24	School development strategy; Talent pool; Performance points system	Design; Strategy; Implementation
Uni.N-21	F2F	Responsible for discipline education and development	Professor	30	Talent pool; talent development	Implementation; Participant
Uni.N-22	VC	Distinguished visiting professor; Scientific research, teaching and tutoring	Professor	41	Talent attraction; Talent retention	Participant
Uni.N-23	F2F	Newly introduced talent; Scientific research, teaching and tutoring	Professor	15	Talent attraction, retention and development	Participant
Uni.N-TP-HE-24	VC	Applying for resignation	Associate professor	11	Talent retention and talent development; Performance and rewards; Overload pressure	Participant

Appendix Six: Coding Matrix

Themes	Abbreviation	Notes & Frequency
Interviewees' Background Information	IBI	The concentration of these themes within this coding matrix is reflective of intentional interview design. Each theme's frequency is deliberately emphasized to align with the research questions. It enhances the effectiveness and efficiency to address specific aspects of the research.
Talent Definition	TD	
TM Definition	TMD	
Talent Identification	TI	
Talent Attraction	TA	
Talent Retention	TR	
Talent Development	TD	
P University	PU	
N University	NU	
Challenges	CH	
Influencing Factors	IF	
Contribution	CTB	
Strategy	STG	
Culture	CUL	
Suggestions	SUG	

Interviewees' Background Information	Abbreviation	Notes & Frequency
IBI-Age	IBI-AGE	(≥45: 3; <45: 41)
IBI-Male	IBI-M	(27)
IBI-Female	IBI-F	(17
IBI-Position	IBI-POS	(Leadership: 3)
IBI-Title	IBI-TTL	(Professor: 20)
IBI-Year of Working	IBI-YOW	(≥10 years: 23; <10:11)

Talent Definition	Abbreviation	Frequency
TD-Paper and research programme	TD-PRP	(9)
TD-Ph.D.	TD-PHD	(5)
TD-Knowledge and skills	TD-K&S	(12)
TD-Contribution	TD-CTB	(8)
TD-Virtue	TD-VIRT	(5)
TD-Well-behaved	TD-WB	(3)

TM Definition	Abbreviation	Frequency
TMD-Performance management	TMD-PM	(8)
TMD-HRM	TMD-HRM	(11)
TMD-Knowledge management	TMD-KM	(2)
TMD-Policies	TMD-POL	(9)
TMD-Remain the elite	TMD-RE	(2)
TMD-Talent cultivation	TMD-TC	(3)

Talent Identification	Abbreviation	Frequency

TI-Education Background	TI-EDU	(6)
TI-Academic Achievement	TI-AA	(15)
TI-Leadership	TI-LDR	(2)
TI-Research Abilities	TI-RES	(5)
TI-Creative Abilities	TI-CRS	(3)
TI-Potential	TI-POT	(5)
TI-Specialized	TI-SPT	(6)
TI-Title	TI-TTL	(2)
Talent Attraction	**Abbreviation**	**Frequency**
TA-Platform and Resource	TA-PR	(9)
TA-Development Opportunity	TA-DEV	(21)
TA-Region	TA-REG	(3)
TA-Working Environment	TA-WE	(5)
TA-Work Autonomy	TA-AUT	(2)
TA-Economy	TA-ECON	(3)
TA-Professional Fit	TA-PFIT	(3)
TA-Interpersonal Connections	TA-IC	(2)
TA-Family Factors	TA-FAM	(10)
TA-Stable	TA-STB	(7)
TA-Have Holidays	TA-HOL	(6)
TA-Free Time, and Highly Disposable	TA-FREE	(7)
TA-Reputation and Respectable	TA-REP	(5)
TA-Team	TA-TEAM	(3)
Talent Retention	**Abbreviation**	**Frequency**
TR-Professional Development Opportunities	TR-PD	(7)
TR-Compensation	TR-COMP	(8)
TR-Positive Work Environment	TR-WE	(3)
TR-Advancement Opportunities	TR-AO	(13)
TR-Administrative Support	TR-AS	(3)
TR-Feeling Valued	TR-VAL	(9)
TR-Bianzhi	TR-BZ	(2)
TR-Job Security	TR-JS	(2)
TR-Agreement of Contract	TR-AGR	(4)
TR-Recognition and Rewards	TR-REC	(2)
TR-Tenure Track	TR-TT	(4)
Talent Development	**Abbreviation**	**Frequency**
TD-Continuous Training	TD-CT	(11)
TD-Research Skill Development	TD-RSD	(9)
TD-Teaching Enhancement	TD-TE	(3)
TD-Mentorship Programmes	TD-MP	(3)
TD-Funding	TD-FUD	(5)
TD-Educational Improvement	TD-EI	(4)
TD-International Programmes	TD-IP	(2)

TD-Certification and Qualification	TD-CQ	(4)
P University	**Abbreviation**	**Frequency**
PU-Classified Management of Teachers	PU-CMT	(3)
PU-Up or Out	PU-UO	(14)
PU-Six-year Assessment	PU-SYA	(8)
PU-Professional Promotion System	PU-PPS	(3)
PU-New and Old System	PU-NOS	(17)
PU-Tenure-Track	PU-TT	(20)
PU-Well-Paid	PU-WP	(6)
PU-Incremental Reform	PU-IR	(2)
PU-School as an Entity	PU-SE	(3)
PU-Stress and Involution ('Neijuan')	PU-NJ	(7)
PU-First-class Teachers	PU-FCT	(2)
PU-Academic Right	PU-AR	(4)
PU-International Standard	PU-IS	(3)
PU-Group Interest	PU-GI	(2)
N University	**Abbreviation**	**Frequency**
NU-Gongfen System	NU-GF	(23)
NU-Performance Assessment	NU-PA	(17)
NU-New Headmaster	NU-NH	(3)
NU-Double First-class University Construction	NU-DFUC	(6)
NU-Professional Promotion	NU-PP	(15)
NU-Funds and Papers	NU-FP	(11)
NU-Guanxi	NU-GX	(4)
NU-Treatment	NU-TT	(2)
NU-Talent Attraction	NU-TA	(3)
NU-Do a PhD	NU-DPHD	(4)
NU-Teaching Useless	NU-TU	(2)
NU-Reform	NU-RF	(20)
NU-School Autonomy	NU-SA	(3)
NU-Lying Flat ('Tangping')	NU-TP	(5)
Challenges	**Abbreviation**	**Frequency**
CH-Retention Issues	CH-RI	(2)
CH-Professional Development Limitations	CH-PDL	(5)
CH-TM Effectiveness	CH-EFF	(3)
CH-Implementation Issues	CH-IMP	(7)
CH-Performance System	CH-PS	(18)
CH-Utilitarianism	CH-UTI	(3)
CH-Up or Out System Dissatisfaction	CH-DIS	(6)
CH-Gongfen system Opposition	CH-OPP	(5)
CH-Publish or Out	CH-PUB	(22)
CH-Mental stress and insecurity	CH-STR	(4)
CH-Compensation	CH-CPS	(4)

CH-Research Interests	CH-RI	(3)
CH-Weak Position	CH-WP	(3)
CH-Similar Policy	CH-SP	(4)
CH-Limited Participation	CH-LP	(2)
CH-Unfair	CH-UF	(13)

Influencing Factors	**Abbreviation**	**Frequency**
IF-Policies	IF-POL	(9)
IF-Leadership	IF-LEA	(4)
IF-Culture	IF-CUL	(2)
IF-Internationalization Strategies	IF-IS	(6)
IF-Mission and Values	IF-MV	(4)
IF-Budget and Benefits	IF-BB	(12)
IF-Performance	IF-PERF	(10)

Contribution	**Abbreviation**	**Frequency**
CTB-Research Productivity	CTB-RP	(12)
CTB-Achieve Strategic Objectives	CTB-SG	(5)
CTB-Strategic Alignment with University Goals	CTB-UG	(2)
CTB-Competitive Remuneration Packages	CTB-CRP	(2)
CTB-Avoidance of Guanxi network	CTB-GX	(4)
CTB-Internationalisation	CTB-INT	(8)
CTB-Competitive Atmosphere	CTB-CA	(7)
CTB-Academic Achievements	CTB-AA	(5)
CTB-Enhanced Talent Pool	CTB-TP	(4)
CTB-Faculty Development	CTB-FD	(13)

Strategy	**Abbreviation**	**Frequency**
STG-Dynamic Development	STG-DD	(2)
STG-Overall Strategy	STG-OS	(7)
STG-Top-down Approach	STG-TDA	(9)
STG-Double First-class Strategy	STG-DFS	(4)
STG-Classified Management System	STG-CMS	(5)
STG-Strategic Planning	STG-SP	(7)
STG-Research and Teaching	STG-RT	(4)

Culture	**Abbreviation**	**Frequency**
CUL-Shazaoshu	CUL-SZS	(3)
CUL-Cultural Values	CUL-CV	(6)
CUL-Leadership Influence	CUL-LI	(2)
CUL-Cultural Alignment	CUL-CA	(3)
CUL-Adaptive	CUL-AD	(4)

Suggestions	**Abbreviation**	**Frequency**
SUG-Performance Recognition Metrics	SUG-PRM	(6)

SUG-Decision Making	SUG-DM	(2)
SUG- Resource Allocation	SUG-RA	(3)
SUG- Motivate Talent	SUG-MT	(3)
SUG- Talent Service	SUG-TS	(4)