

# **Talent Management in UAE: A study of contemporary practices in the banking industry**

إدارة المواهب في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة: دراسة للممارسات المعاصرة لإدارة المواهب في  
القطاع المصرفي

**By**

**Buthaina Abir**

**Student ID: 100021**

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of MSc in Human Resources Management

Faculty of Business

Dissertation Supervisor

Professor Ashly H. Pinnington

September 2015.

# **Talent Management in UAE: A study of contemporary practices in the banking industry**

Dissertation Length: 25,418

Appendices are available upon request. Please contact the author to request a copy

## Declaration

### Dissertation Release Form

<b>Student Name</b> <b>Buthaina Abir</b>	<b>Student ID</b> <b>100021</b>	<b>Programme</b> <b>MSc in Human Resources</b> <b>Management</b>	<b>Date</b> <b>September 2015</b>
---	------------------------------------	--	--------------------------------------

<b>Title</b> <b>Talent Management in UAE: A study of contemporary practices in the</b> <b>banking industry</b>
--

I warrant that the content of this dissertation is the direct result of my own work and that any use made in it of published or unpublished copyright material falls within the limits permitted by international copyright conventions.

I understand that one copy of my dissertation will be deposited in the University Library for permanent retention.

I hereby agree that the material mentioned above for which I am author and copyright holder may be copied and distributed by The British University in Dubai for the purposes of research, private study or education and that The British University in Dubai may recover from purchasers the costs incurred in such copying and distribution, where appropriate.

I understand that The British University in Dubai may make that copy available in digital format if appropriate.

I understand that I may apply to the University to retain the right to withhold or to restrict access to my dissertation for a period which shall not normally exceed four calendar years from the congregation at which the degree is conferred, the length of the period to be specified in the application, together with the precise reasons for making that application.

<b>Signature</b> <b>Buthaina Abir</b>
--

---

## Abstract

---

The social science and practices of human resource management have developed along with the changes across industries, countries, technology and other sources of knowledge. One of the relatively recent and promising innovations in human resources is talent management. Over the last few years talent management practices have made their way in to the local and international organizations in UAE, providing them with tools and techniques to attract, develop and retain their talented employees. In this dissertation, talent management's implementation in the UAE is investigated and compared to global best practices on talent selection, development and retention. It also studies what this developing science might offer in the future and assesses how it should overcome its current challenges. Particular attention is given to tackling national talent issues such as developing capabilities and careers, dealing with challenges to the vision of the future from Emiratization and UAE perspectives since the research is focused on the UAE context.

The main source of primary data is based on interviews with a sample of 15 employees, using a detailed interview schedule designed for qualitative research study. The sample was drawn from one of the largest international banks in the UAE that has applied talent management practices within the financial services industry, which is one of the most advanced and competitive industry sectors in the UAE.

Many of the practices of talent management and Emiratization implemented in the company and the country can be improved further for the programs to achieve their objectives more effectively. A road map is required for new talent management programs and implementation strategies, if the UAE is to build its national talent pool more extensively than before. For example, robust plans should be developed which are linked to the organization's objectives for talent management. The organizational strategy should be supported by clear and well communicated processes and procedures, customized and up to date talent management plans and programs, situated within the national context of an improved educational system, together with better marketing and explanation of the nationalization programs' aims and objectives.

## ملخص

لقد تطورت العلوم الاجتماعية والتطبيقية للموارد البشرية جنباً إلى جنب مع التطورات في كافة المجالات الصناعية والتطورات العمرانية والتكنولوجية والمعارف الأخرى، وواحدة من الابتكارات الحديثة نسبياً الواعدة في مجال الموارد البشرية هي إدارة المواهب. خلال السنوات الماضية شقت ممارسات إدارة المواهب طريقها إلى المنظمات و الشركات المحلية والدولية في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، مزودة الشركات بأدوات لجذب وتطوير موظفيها الموهوبين و بوسائل للمحافظة عليهم.

بالمقابل يُعنى هذا البحث بدراسة تطبيقات إدارة المواهب في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، بالمقارنة مع أفضل الممارسات العالمية في إختيار الموظفين الموهوبين، وتطويرهم والمحافظة عليهم. وناقش أيضاً ما يمكن أن يُقدم هذا العلم النامي في المستقبل وكيف يستطيع هزيمة تحدياته الحالية. في حين يُولي البحث إهتمام خاص بمعالجة مواضيع تختص بتنشئة المواهب الوطنية ؛ مثل : تطوير القدرات والمهّن، والتعامل مع تحديات الرؤية المستقبلية لبرامج المواهب من منظوري التوطين والإمارات العربية المتحدة، حيث أن البحث يركز على سياق دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة.

الطريقة التي إستُخدمت لجمع المعلومات الأساسية للبحث كانت بإجراء مقابلات مع عينة مكونة من 15 موظف، وذلك باستخدام إستبيان مفصل كأداة في هذا البحث النوعي. عينة البحث كانت من إحدى أكبر البنوك العالمية في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة التي تطبق ممارسات إدارة المواهب في مجال الخدمات المالية، التي تعد واحدة من المجالات والقطاعات الأكثر تقدماً وتنافسية في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة.

إن العديد من ممارسات و برامج إدارة المواهب والتوطين التي نُفذت في الشركة وفي البلاد بشكلٍ عام بحاجة الى تحسين و تطوير حتى تحقق البرامج أهدافها بشكل فعّال وأفضل. و حتى تتمكن دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة من مواصلة بناء و تنمية المواهب الوطنية و تطويرها على نطاق أوسع، هي في حاجة لرسم خارطة طريق لبرامج إدارة المواهب الجديدة ، وخطط إستراتيجية لتطبيق و تنفيذ هذه البرامج. على سبيل المثال؛ تكوين خطط إستراتيجية قوية لإدارة المواهب وربطها بأهداف المنظمة التي تعمل بها، مدعومةً بإجراءات و تطبيقات واضحة للخطط والتي يجب أن يتم إيصالها وإبلاغها للموظفين بشكل جيد، تطويع خطط إدارة المواهب و برامجها حتى تناسب كل موظف موهوب، و تحسين نظام التعليم من منطلق و سياق تنمية المواهب الوطنية ، مع تسويق و شرح أهداف و غايات برامج التوطين بشكل أفضل.

---

## Acknowledgment

---

“Thank you” the best way to end a long journey filled with challenges and obstacles, is to thank, appreciate and recognize the main reasons and parties behind & involved in making this journey an option, and more importantly ending it possible.

First and foremost I thank God, for everything and for giving me what I need at the right time.

I believe one of the major reasons that God gifted me to help and guide me through this journey of completing this thesis is my research supervisor. My sincere gratitude and appreciation to Professor Ashly H. Pinnington, for his patient, continuing support and understanding.

To my dear family, Dad whom always asks us to elevate and aim higher, my friends and my current Boss, I say thank you for your patients, support and for pushing me to close the dissertation which I know you perceive as an achievement of yours as well. Thanks for your love and support each on your own way.

I dedicate to you all my dissertation. May this be one of the milestones leading me to fulfil my purpose in life...and of an added value to the readers...

## Table of Contents

DECLARATION.....	3
ABSTRACT.....	4
ملخص.....	5
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	6
LIST OF FIGURES.....	9
LIST OF TABLES.....	10
LIST OF CHARTS.....	10
<b>CHAPTER 1.....</b>	<b>11</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	11
<b><u>1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>
<b><u>1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY.....</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>
<b><u>1.3 AIM, OBJECTIVES, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....</u></b>	<b><u>13</u></b>
<b><u>1.4 RESEARCH PLAN AND STRUCTURE.....</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>
<b><u>1.5 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS.....</u></b>	<b><u>15</u></b>
<b>CHAPTER 2.....</b>	<b>16</b>
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	16
<b><u>2.1 TALENT MANAGEMENT: DEFINITION AND EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT.....</u></b>	<b><u>16</u></b>
<b><u>2.2 CURRENT PRACTICES AND CONTEMPORARY PROCEDURES.....</u></b>	<b><u>18</u></b>
<b><u>2.3 CHALLENGES.....</u></b>	<b><u>22</u></b>
<b><u>2.4 EMIRATIZATION AND NATIONAL TALENT.....</u></b>	<b><u>24</u></b>
<b><u>2.5 FUTURE TRENDS AND DIRECTIONS.....</u></b>	<b><u>27</u></b>
<b>CHAPTER 3.....</b>	<b>30</b>
METHODOLOGY.....	30
<b><u>3.1 INTRODUCTION.....</u></b>	<b><u>30</u></b>
<b><u>3.2 LIMITATIONS.....</u></b>	<b><u>30</u></b>

<b>3.3</b>	<b><u>THE STUDY BACKGROUND</u></b>	<b><u>31</u></b>
<b>3.4</b>	<b><u>SAMPLE</u></b>	<b><u>31</u></b>
<b>3.5</b>	<b><u>INTERVIEWS: STRUCTURE AND CONTENT</u></b>	<b><u>32</u></b>
<b>3.6</b>	<b><u>DATA COLLECTION (PROCEDURE)</u></b>	<b><u>33</u></b>
<b>3.7</b>	<b><u>DATA ANALYSIS</u></b>	<b><u>36</u></b>
<b>3.8</b>	<b><u>DATA VALIDITY</u></b>	<b><u>36</u></b>
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>		<b><u>37</u></b>
<b>ANALYSIS</b>		<b><u>37</u></b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b><u>BACKGROUND</u></b>	<b><u>37</u></b>
<b>4.2</b>	<b><u>CASE STUDY QUESTIONS, STRUCTURE AND DESIGN</u></b>	<b><u>37</u></b>
<b>4.3</b>	<b><u>BIOGRAPHICAL DATA ON THE PARTICIPANTS</u></b>	<b><u>38</u></b>
<b>4.4</b>	<b><u>LIMITATIONS</u></b>	<b><u>38</u></b>
<b>4.5</b>	<b><u>PARTICIPANT'S' VIEWS</u></b>	<b><u>38</u></b>
<b>4.5.1</b>	<b><u>MACRO CONTEXT</u></b>	<b><u>39</u></b>
<b>4.5.2</b>	<b><u>ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL</u></b>	<b><u>45</u></b>
<b>4.5.3</b>	<b><u>FUTURE PROSPECTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</u></b>	<b><u>54</u></b>
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>		<b><u>64</u></b>
<b>DISCUSSION</b>		<b><u>64</u></b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b><u>QUESTION ONE:</u></b>	<b><u>64</u></b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b><u>QUESTION TWO:</u></b>	<b><u>70</u></b>
<b>5.3</b>	<b><u>QUESTION THREE:</u></b>	<b><u>72</u></b>
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>		<b><u>76</u></b>
<b>CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION</b>		<b><u>76</u></b>
<b>6.1</b>	<b><u>INTRODUCTION</u></b>	<b><u>76</u></b>
<b>6.2</b>	<b><u>RECOMMENDATIONS</u></b>	<b><u>77</u></b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>		<b><u>83</u></b>

---

## List of Figures

---

	<b>Page</b>
Figure 1: Research Plan	14
Figure 2: Talent Management Process	18
Figure 3: Participant's view of talent sample	39
Figure 4: Talent identifiers in the participant's	40
Figure 5: Talent Drivers	41
Figure 6: Talent Supply and Demand	42
Figure 7: The participants' view of the Emiratization policies	43
Figure 8: Interviewees' shared viewpoint on who is responsible and shapes TM	45
Figure 9: Talent Management practices in the organization	47
Figure 10: Existence of stereotypes and biases against Emiratis	51
Figure 11: Stereotypes and biases against Emiratis	52
Figure 12: Challenges in the future of TM	54
Figure 13: Roles of Government, Organizations, and others in TM	56

---

## List of Tables

---

	<b>Page</b>
Table 1: Perspective on talent and talent management	17
Table 2: UAE national's unemployment rate	25
Table 3: Turning point; failing to climb	27
Table 4: The interviews participant's demographic	38
Table 5: TM development challenges	55
Table 6: Role of Government, Organizations, and others in TM - Participant's comments	57-59

---

## List of Charts

---

	<b>Page</b>
Chart 1: Methodology procedures flow and timeline	35

---

## Introduction

---

### 1.1 Introduction and Background

For decades organizations have faced various challenges and undergone numerous battles to survive, achieve competitive advantage and sustain it. These challenges occurs on different levels and grounds; wither on business lines, technology and innovation, people management, and new trends in society and markets. One of the most challenging equations to solve in people management sciences nowadays is how to develop talented employees and utilize their capabilities best, as a tool to achieve success through developing and retaining the best human resources.

Since human resources are one of the major valuable capitals of organizations, they often have to compete among themselves for these resources, since human capital can enable them to advance and gain bigger market values and share. In a number of markets, the availability of talented employees is decreasing, as the need is emphasized not for obtaining any kind of employees whom can work, but on bringing in resources that can add value to the company with the skills, capabilities and the progression potential that they possess.

An article on wining “The race for talent” published in 2013, stated how deep the issue is mentioning that “the world’s three largest workforces—the United States, India and China—all have chronic and growing talent shortages, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics-related (STEM) occupations. Germany, Japan, South Korea, Brazil, South Africa and many other nations now face growing skills and jobs mismatches as well. There are two principal causes:

1. The continuing spread of digital technology across every business sector raises job skill requirements.
2. A demographic shift is under way. Populations are in decline across the European Union, Japan, Korea and soon China. Further, in many nations the baby boom generation is moving into retirement” (Gordon, 2013, p. 29).

Due to the challenge or difficulty in having talented employees available as a consequence of their demand in global labour markets; organizations have started to also develop human resources to be at the right level of knowledge and capabilities that they need. With internal and external acquired resources aligned for these strategic developments and investments; organizations have started thinking and acting differently in protecting these resources from leaving. As a result a set of practices have evolved to address these challenges and needs, labeled as and summarized in the Talent Management “TM” concept, which is the focus and subject of this study.

Many organizations describes or view talented employees as; individuals with mixture of valuable talents and characteristics relevant to the organization like potential, intellectual capabilities, ‘knowledge’, ‘competencies’ and the right attitude (Tansley, 2011, p. 271). We can also notice another possible reason for growing talented employees, is due to the previously mentioned reasons, and recent changes in the market stability, the organizations focus shifted on growing internal assets and forces of the organization’s human capital rather than recruiting externally only. The reason behind this is primarily cost and quality; the cost of new hires as well as attrition costs. Through developing the most valuable resources that will enhance their own productivity and performance organizations simultaneously tackle the quality issues.

## **1.2 Research problem and Rationale of the study**

We can establish from the information and from the literature that Talent Management is not a new practice nor a recent trend, yet it remains quite a vague and broad-ranging topic that needs to be analyzed and studied in more depth. This applies especially to research studies on the subject within the UAE context; while many organizations in the UAE have adopted talent management practices across different sectors and fields, one of them is the highly competitive banking sector, only a limited number of research studies however have been done to examine how TM is implemented in organizations based in the UAE.

As a recent study on TM mentioned, regardless of TM’s popularity nowadays, the number of studies and researches on the topic are not sufficient and scientific knowledge on the subject remains minimal (Collings & Mellahi, 2009, p. 311).

In addition, as an HR practitioner for more than nine years dealing with TM programs, and being part of two organizations’ talent pools, I have developed a passion within me towards this subject. I have gained knowledge, theoretical and practical, on the topic that I like to share and apply within the UAE context and specifically the issues relating to growing national talents. Thus, I identified several reasons for producing a dissertation that studies talent management in the UAE, focusing on the banking sector to explore the contemporary practices in this field in one of the most dynamic sectors in UAE in terms of adopting new human resources practices. An additional purpose of this study, is to explore possible areas that could be developed in the future. Accordingly, the knowledge enclosed in this dissertation and in conducting the research is informed by the practical expertise and information that I have which I believe helped giving this research an added advantage that some other studies on TM might not have.

### **1.3 Aim, objectives, and research questions**

#### **Aim**

This research aims to study talent management implementation, challenges and future in UAE and specifically in the banking industry.

#### **Research questions**

The research mainly addressed the below mentioned questions:

1. How is “Talent Management” practiced in the banking sector? And does it also cover and concerned national talents?
2. What are the challenges facing the “Talent Management programs” in the banking sectors?
3. What could be the potential advances and solutions of Talent Management Programs in banks and what are the alternative feasible ways forwards?

#### **Objectives**

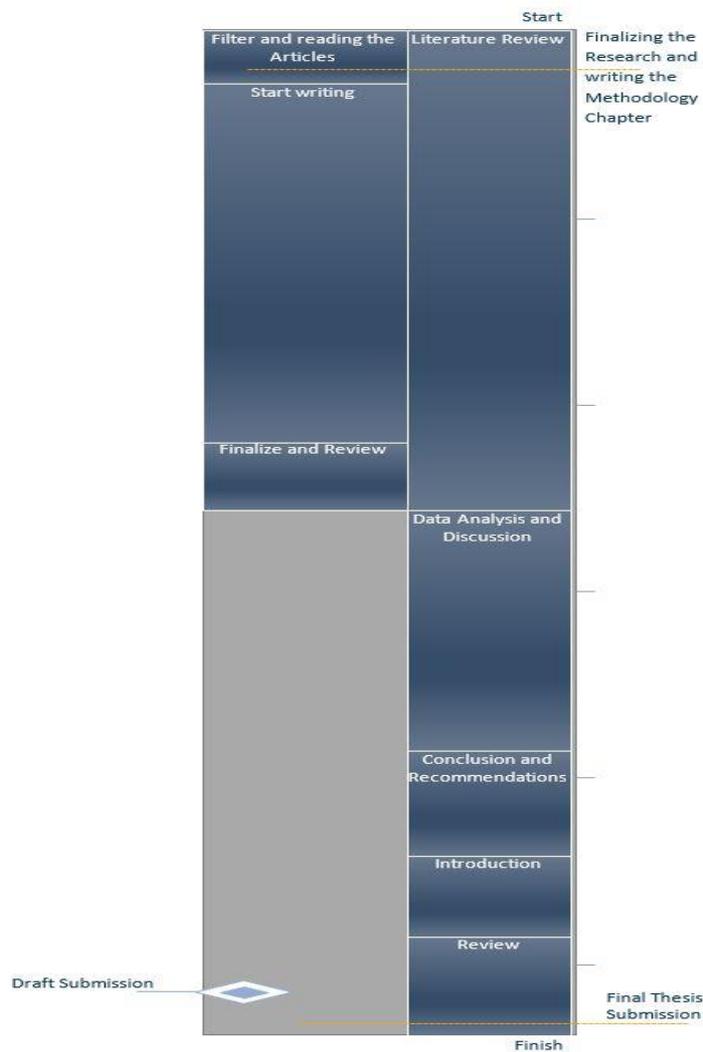
The objectives of this research, as defined below, draw the lines of investigation that will be followed in this dissertation to achieve the desired outcomes from the study and answer the research questions:

- To establish and define what is talent management.
- To review talent management’s history, background, process and procedures.
- To explore what are the current talent management practices, and what are TM practices in the banking industry.
- To examine relevant data on Emiratization and national talent.
- To discover the challenges faced in the field of Talent Management generally, in the banking sector, Emiratization and the development and advancement of national talents, specifically.
- To determine how to address the current challenges, identify and recommend what should be the future practices.

## 1.4 Research Plan and structure

The research was planned and executed as follows and represented in Figure 1:

- Reading literate reviews related to the subject
- Analyzing the research problem
- Collecting the data using qualitative methods
- Conducting interviews with 15 participants in the chosen organization
- Analyzing the data. Reviewing and reading further literature reviews to further analyze the data
- Writing and presenting the findings of the research
- Finalize the research and the final recommendations on the subject



**Figure 1:** Research Plan

Also, below is a brief overview of the research's structure and its various sections:

- Introduction chapter: an introductory part of the research that goes through the objectives, reasons and questions of the research amongst other information that forms its direction.
- Literature review chapter: this section reviews relevant literature on the subject and the related areas, providing an insight of the previous research and opinions on the topics.
- Methodology chapter: the actual study structure, background and execution are described in this part of the dissertation.
- Data Analysis chapter: previews the results and outcomes of the research.
- Discussion chapter: discusses the results in view of the relevant literature and based on the researcher's interpretation and perspective.
- Recommendation and conclusion chapter: includes a summary of the major research findings, outcomes and evaluation. Recommendations are made that can be considered and applied in the UAE, and particularly in the banking industry.

## **1.5 Research limitations**

The research limitations were:

1. This research scope was limited to the context of the UAE.
2. There are a limited number of companies which adopt or practice TM in the UAE.
3. Further studies on Emiratization and national talents can be considered and are needed as the published studies in this field are limited.
4. The study can be extended to other banks and financial organizations to cover the whole sector in the UAE and internationally.
5. Accessibility to information and confidentiality limitations may have affected or influenced several of the participant's interview accounts and expressed viewpoints.

Other limitations specific to conducting the survey are listed in the methodology and data analysis chapters. In the next section, we explore further the literatures which inform this dissertation.

---

### Literature Review

---

Talent Management (TM) is a relatively new topic in Human Resource Management (HRM) practice and theory. It emerged in the late 1990s stimulated by an article published in the McKinsey Quarterly and has evolved during the last decade and since then has been a very popular subject among organizations, HR consultancies and the HRM function.

This chapter explores several literatures on TM and other subjects that are related to this study like; Emiratization, competency based HRM, and performance based rewards schemes, etc....

#### **2.1 Talent Management: definition and evolution of the concept**

Examining the concept of talent and talent management in more depth will help academics and practitioners understand the meaning, relevance and applications of this topic.

##### **Definition and concepts**

Scientists and researchers have defined “Talent” and “Talent Management” in a number of different ways, each explaining the concepts from different angles. Probably one of the most simple and comprehensive definitions available are the CIPD’s definitions of “talent” and “Talent Management”.

The CIPD defines talented people as “individuals who can make a difference to organisational performance either through their immediate contribution or, in the longer-term, by demonstrating the highest levels of potential” (Talent management: an overview - Factsheets - CIPD, 2011).

Talent Management, the CIPD defines as “The systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement, retention and deployment of those individuals who are of particular value to an organisation, either in view of their ‘high potential’ for the future or because they are fulfilling business/operation-critical roles” (Talent management: an overview - Factsheets - CIPD, 2011).

One of the core mechanisms of TM is “succession management”, which refers to the process & procedure used to find potential “successors” for key positions in the organization. These potential successors are identified as part of the TM process, which requires actively building on those potential leaders’ capabilities in ways that will allow them to assume the selected positions in the future or to move on to other significant work roles (Stadler, 2011, p. 264).

There are various approaches and views about TM, and the table below summarizes them. This table is adapted from (Stewart & Rigg, Learning and Talent Development, 2011, p. 28) and describes the different approaches of organizations in defining and managing their talent. The ‘Individual’ oriented organizations in the context of scarce resources tends to attract highly talented people to employ them and develop them to be promoted later on to top positions. Organization’s that focus on individuals tend to deploy them in the most suitable roles and, wherever possible, nurture their skills and talent. In contrast, organizations that adopt more of a holistic view rather than an individualist perspective focus less on individual talent gaps and more on collective systems and processes for creating second-in-line resources, people who will be successors for key roles and create a talent supply of future leaders. “Talent pools” are often created in other organizations that have a good internal pipeline of talented employees, to prepare them and have the talent supply ready for any future roles.

<b>Individual focus</b>			
<b>Talent as scarce resource</b>	Stars High-flyers Organisation processes to attract, nurture and keep exceptionally talented people for future top positions	L&D and HR processes to maximise everyone’s potential  Ensure right person in right job	<b>Talent as plentiful</b>
	Succession planning – integrated organisation processes to nurture supply of future managers/leaders for key positions Configuration of organisation resources to enable talented people to achieve full potential	Interventions to develop talent pool across the workforce  Developing collective organisation capacity	
<b>Organisation focus</b>			

Table 1: Perspective on talent and talent management.

Source: (Stewart & Rigg, Learning and Talent Development, 2011, p. 28)

## 2.2 Current practices and contemporary procedures

Given that TM is defined and perceived differently by organizations, it is perhaps unsurprising that organizational and TM objectives also differ. The next section examines some of the current practices in TM and will explore the common contemporary principles of talent management.

### The process of talent management

As identified by Collings & Mellahi (2009) in their review of TM studies, linking the organization's objectives for TM, and developing a strategy for implementing them are key steps to commence the process. These researchers identify TM strategy as requiring the development of HR measures and procedures for methodically identifying critical roles in the organization that are considered to be of greatest influence in achieving the organization's objectives. This TM process requires building up the 'talent pool of high potential and high performing' candidates for future roles, and implementing a customized HRM structure and design that will positively contribute to recruiting and retaining the right candidates for the identified roles (Collings & Mellahi, Strategic talent management: A review and research agenda, 2009, p. 305).

After designing a TM strategy, the actual process of managing talent starts with finding out whether the talented resources exist internally or need to be recruited externally from the market, and accordingly develop and retain the resources as illustrated in the figure below (Chabault, Hulin, & Soparnot, 2012, p. 329).

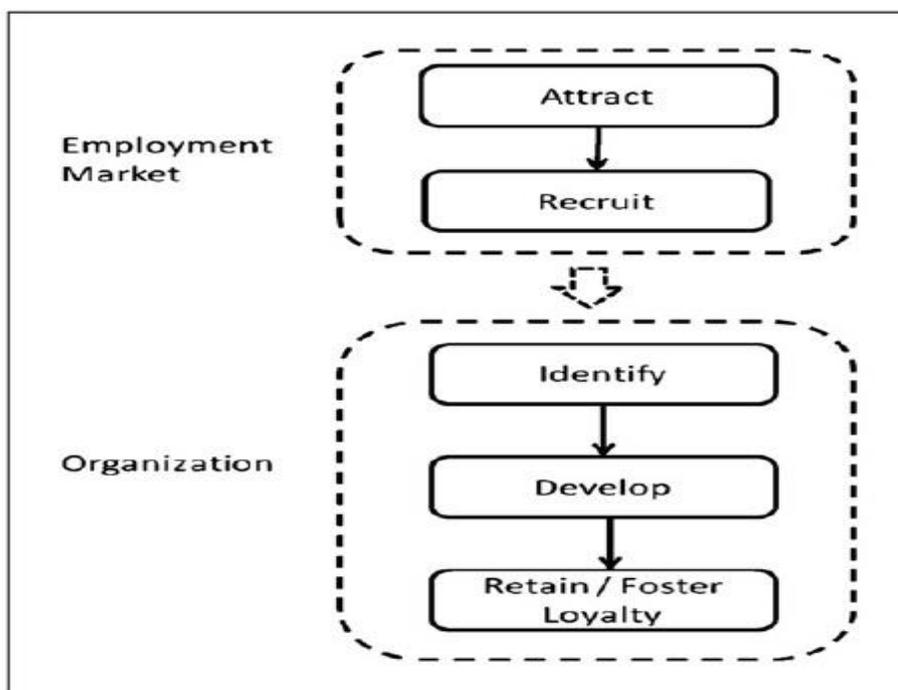


Figure 2: Talent Management Process.

Source (Chabault, Hulin, & Soparnot, 2012, p. 329)

The above figure defines the different steps of the TM process, which starts with either hiring talent externally or identifying them internally. Once the talent candidates are identified the organization works on making them ready for the key roles they are planned to succeed to and accordingly making sure that they remain within the organization to help it achieve its “competitive advantage” and fulfill the purpose of the TM program by protecting the organization’s investments in its chosen talent.

When analyzing the TM process it is noticeable that it is not completely different from commonly available frameworks for designing and implementing HRM practices in areas such as employee resourcing and development.

Indeed, one can argue that TM processes are deeply embedded within standardized sets of HRM practices. Consequently, “talent management can be seen as a scientific discipline that falls under the umbrella term HRM, covering one specific niche of it” (Meyers, van Woerkom, & Dries, 2013, p. 318), since it is embedded in and driven through HRM practices such as employee resourcing & selection, development and retention.

Based on the previously mentioned points about TM practices and processes, the main distinction between routine HRM practices and TM, are that TM is mainly customized HRM practices designed to deliver the main objective of TM, which is to supply the organization with the current or future supply of successors and leaders by creating a pool of potential candidates for meeting internal labour market demand.

### **Talent acquisition and selection**

Talent acquisition or selection is the process of attracting the required talent, internally or externally, and “identifying” or selecting them to be part of the organization’s talent pool. Several studies though show that few companies rigorously adopt either an internal or external approach to identify talent and even more rarely do they implement a combination of both.

TM is strongly influenced by the management and HRM practices that different organizations follow. Some studies have suggested that senior managers prefer to recruit talented candidates who already possess the required competencies and skills that don’t exist in the organization, and are less enthusiastic about systems and practices for developing such talent in people based on the concept of the “war of talent” developed by McKinsey. “Innate talent” as they refer to it is based on the notion that talents in individuals cannot be developed, talented people according to the study are born talented and their natural or native talent grows with them, distinguishing them among other job seekers or employees. Thus TM processes based on this assumption focuses mainly on attracting and hiring the most talented individuals available in the work force and retaining them in the organization thereafter.

Such organizations concentrate on building a highly attractive image of the organization to be perceived as an “Employer of choice” so as to gain the interest of the most talented candidates available in the market (Meyers, van Woerkom, & Dries, 2013, p. 314).

The concept of the organization growing its own talent internally involves a very different understanding of what “acquired talent” means. For organizations that adopt this approach “talent management systems necessarily underline the importance of HR development and make use of a diverse set of HR practices that aim at expanding employees' knowledge, skills, and abilities”, They concentrate more on developing the potential of talented employees and making them ready to take on more challenging roles and place less importance on externally recruiting talented candidates (Meyers, van Woerkom, & Dries, 2013, p. 315). Another study argues that this approach of identifying potentially talented individuals internally, and to “promote from within”, in creating the organization’s talent pool means strongly connecting the talent ‘selection’ process with talent ‘development’ (Lewis & Heckman, 2006, p. 151).

While both of the concepts seem valid on the face of it; adopting exclusively only one approach to TM, in the view of the current market situation, staff shortages, the time and cost involved in employees’ training and development, and the general level of mobility of candidates all seem limiting factors to organizations that intend to grow faster in the market and gain a competitive advantage.

Acquiring external talent, on the one hand, has the potential to expand the organization’s scope for acquiring different talents that might open new fields for the firm to operate in and gain their business a top of the range market position. Whereas, on the other hand, grooming the organization’s currently employed staff will help them commit to supplying their employer with talent as needed since they know the culture, systems and requirements of the organization very well.

### **Talent development**

Talent Development practices are designed to develop talented employees, that have been selected either internally or externally to be part of the talent pool, and motivate them to excel by fostering an environment that provides them with chances to prove themselves and grow. This employee development is attained through the common HRM practices of “training” and “mentoring”, along with more distinctive practices such as staff “mobility” that gives that staff opportunities wherever they exist if the organization operates in several countries, or on temporary assignments like “secondments” that will encourage talented employees to express their skills and to apply them (Chabault, Hulin, & Soparnot, 2012, p. 333).

### **Talent retention**

It has been argued by researchers that retaining the talented employees is in the organizations' best interest (Collings & Mellahi, Strategic talent management: A review and research agenda, 2009, p. 310). The main reason is that individuals possess talents hence once they leave the organization cannot benefit or utilize those talents anymore (Chabault, Hulin, & Soparnot, 2012, p. 333). Unlike the traditional retention measures, using employee internal mobility approaches and rotating talent within the organization have been adopted in a few organizations and found to be a valid, if somewhat uncommon, means of retention (Chabault, Hulin, & Soparnot, 2012, p. 333). These retention tools can help the organization maintain its talent after all and benefit from it across the entire organization rather than solely in particular departments or countries.

### **Process review**

An integral part of any management process is to review it. Similarly, TM needs to go through regular processes of evaluation and enhancement, and the talent pool members needs to be assessed yearly against the desired objectives & their accomplishment, i.e., "talent audits" (Williamson, 2011, p. 35).

## 2.3 Challenges

Adopting and applying Talent management practices, similar to any other management practices or processes, raises various challenges and difficulties especially since it is beyond its initial phase but still in a new and evolving stage. This section highlights TM challenges that are relevant to this study:

### **Challenges in implementing talent management**

TM practices can improve organizational performance and help organizations succeed in their business markets. This is demonstrated in the case study of “Becton Dickinson” company in Japan by (Romans & Lardner, 2005), where they implemented TM practices as part of the overall organizational change and business process reengineering. One success factor, was considered to be the organization’s decision to adopt a holistic approach in applying TM to achieve the desired results. However, revamping the whole organization to implement TM practices is quite challenging, particularly considering the financial, cultural and other internal & external organizational factors involved in executing such a decision.

Research shows that TM generally is not being fully embraced within many organizations (Uren & Samuel, 2007, p. 33). This may be having a negative effect on organizations’ performances as the study suggests, “In organizations where talent management was perceived to be more strongly embedded, there were higher levels of total shareholder return. Over a five-year period these organizations outperformed those where talent management was perceived to be less well-embedded by 67 percent” (Uren & Samuel, 2007, p. 33).

Measures defined by the study that are necessary to fully embrace TM include: top management ‘buy-in’ and support, raising the abilities and knowledge of TM “stakeholders” (i.e. individuals, line managers and human resources professionals) and creating strong infrastructure for implementing TM processes and procedures (Uren & Samuel, 2007, p. 33). They propose that within organizations the first measure is the most important one.

One of the main challenges facing TM and managing talented employees is the way these issues are currently managed. Some researchers have argued that the ‘traditional’ HRM approach that is adopted by some firms is not suitable for managing talented employees, since they often are more career-oriented and also are aware of their value to the company. Hence; they can be unresponsive to the more traditional ways of managing and leading people in organizations ‘Traditional’ applications of TM practices which have a structured design to decrease uncertainty in managing the organization’s talent have the potential shortcoming that they are not sufficiently flexible to the different needs that talented individuals might have; such as stretch assignments and accelerated “fast track” development

opportunities that place them in really challenging roles and which are likely to make them feel 'rewarded' (Powell & Lubitsh, 2007, p. 25).

Currently, these development practices are not very common but can be found in a few distinctive organizations. TM based on an identified development need or even simply the possibility of offering such development opportunities as the needs occur rather than initially designing them in advance but ensuring they can be made available for the organization's pool of talented employees to groom and retain them.

It is important that more organizations shift towards the newer forms and styles of HRM that address changes in workforce characteristics, by moving more towards a behavioral competency based approach (Nilsson & Ellstrom, 2012).

Another challenge facing the implementation of TM is managers' perceptions of "succession management", some do and some don't view it as a critical part of TM strategy. "Succession management and planning" should be connected with all of the human resources functions underlining its "long-term" purpose and importance (Stadler, 2011, p. 265). This will help the organization to address its needs for successors over the "long term", which is a key objective of adopting TM systems and practices.

### **Challenges in retaining talents**

A study on mobility, migration and the term "brain drain", shows that it is still an area of concern for employers, especially whenever they experience inadequate supply of demanded resources. Nowadays, the problem is more compounded in the light of "boundary less global careers" rather than just resource mobility as the study claims. Creating a "talent flow" as it is conceptualized in the study, wherein the talented employee's skills and competencies can change along with the changing requirements of the organization (Carr, Inkson, & Thorn, 2005, p. 388).

Nevertheless, as a recent study by McKinsey & Co shows this global talent challenge can also be used to the advantage of large international organizations that have the corporate resources to transfer talented employees from one part of the organization to another and incorporate them in ways that both retain and develop their talents (Matthew & Ramesh, 2012).

One of the obstacles in applying TM practices; is specifying talent definitions, descriptions and dimensions that are directly suitable for the organization, and involving all of the concerned parties and partners in the process (Ingham, 2006, p. 21). Straightforward replication of talent practices that are applied in other organizations or best practices in the field, without customizing them to fit the organization and clearly outlining its boundaries may negatively impact on the achievement of many of the goals of the talent program.

## **2.4 Emiratization and national talent**

The empirical research for this dissertation is on TM situated in the UAE context and one of the major elements of the study is UAE national talent and nationalization; in this section we outline a few facts and background information that for a part of the setting of this study.

Firstly, in order to understand the concept of Emiratization and national talent we need to look at the facts about the UAE's population and the country's labour market.

### **The UAE labour market**

It is a well-known fact that traditionally the public sector has been more attractive to UAE nationals than has the private sector. While nowadays this is still the overall trend, due to the limited number of new assignments, services and the number of existing employees; the level of demand and overall capability of the public sector in recruiting and absorbing more national hires is significantly decreasing. Thus there is more emphasis on the private sector for employing young UAE nationals than has been the case in previous decades (Al-Humayd, 2010, p. 106).

The total percentage of UAE nationals employed in the banking sector in 2007 was 29 percent and 5.4 percent in the insurance industry (Al-Khazaraji, 2010, p. 181).

The huge proportion of expatriate workers compared to UAE nationals is a result of the domination of the first group on the UAE's population, due to the great demand for workers of different caliber in the development that the country has gone through and continues to do so.

### **Unemployment and employment of nationals**

Another reason for the smaller share that the UAE national workers occupy in the UAE's labour market is the problem of unemployment. Even though unemployment is a great issue and cause for concern; precise and dependable data on the subject that can facilitate a scientific evaluation of the phenomenon are not available so far (Al-Humayd, 2010, p. 107). Below are the published unemployment percentages produced by the Ministry of Economy, which gives an approximate idea rather than the exact numbers, about the unemployment ratio among UAE nationals in the UAE. And it shows a growth in the rate of unemployment in 2012 compared to 2011.

Citizenship and Gender	2001	2005	2011	2012*
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>3.2</b>
Males	2.8	2.8	1.5	1.8
Females	12.5	7.6	9.8	10.6

Source: Ministry of Economy , Department of Economic Development and Statistics Centre - Abu Dhabi

\* Estimated of Labour Force Survey, 2012

Table 2: **UAE national’s unemployment rate.** Source (Statistics Centre - Abu Dhabi, 2014)

To address the problem of unemployment, GCC governments have taken largely two approaches to growing and utilizing national talent that it wants to employ. The first method used is to steadily substitute expatriate employees with UAE nationals in new and existing jobs, and the second is the creation of future roles through "economical development and expansion" that should be occupied by nationals specifically in the private sector (Al-Humayd, 2010, pp. 109-110).

These two methods were represented by a directive from the Ministry of Labour that mandates private sector companies to increase their UAE National employees by two percent every year in most sectors, and by a further four percent per year in the banking sector and 5 percent in insurance companies. These measures were also supported with establishing legal bodies that are concerned about UAE nationals’ employment and development, like “ The National Human Resources Development and Employment Authority (Tanmia) ” created in 1999 and the “Abu Dhabi Tawteen (Indigenization) Council” (Al-Khazaraji, 2010, p. 174&180).

As can be seen from the above information on the background and facts concerning nationalization and unemployment, there are a number of obstacles facing the UAE Government in decreasing the unemployment rate amongst UAE nationals.

Another dimension that the country can consider to assist with building its national talent and labour force; is through additional investment in its human resources. By means of investing in key fields that have an impact on the development, growth and wellbeing of human resources, such as the “Education system” and Health care services, the country can sustain its growth and areas of strength (Al-Kandari, 2010, p. 439).

One of the measures that the government can also take to encourage TM, is specifically to encourage high potential UAE nationals to join the private sector and ask organizations to consider designing and implementing more creative motivational incentives in the workplace that will attract more UAE nationals to join the private sector. In particular, they need to facilitate a “career development system”, assist them to satisfy and reach their “career goals" and offer them a "motivating pay system" (Bei & Li, 2006).

## 2.5 Future trends and directions

This section sheds light on a number of relatively new practices in TM that could lead the direction of TM systems and practices in the near future.

### Creative talent management practices and performance-based reward schemes

(Joyce & Slocum) studied over a period of 10 years approximately 200 organizations from 40 different fields. According to their study, they categorized organizations into three groups based on their actions and response to talent management challenges over four dimensions, which are “Strategy execution, Fast/flat structure, Culture, and Talent”. Regarding the “Climber”, as they call the successful organizations in their study, features can be seen in the table below (Joyce & Slocum, 2012, p. 189):

<i>Loser</i>	Early Moves <i>Inactive, no focus</i>	Consistent Moves <i>Inactive, fail to build</i>	Late Moves <i>Become active, fail to align and invest</i>
Strategy	Emphasized broad markets/ acquisitions	Focused on niche markets	Emphasized core business Emphasized growth
Execution	Product diversification Weak financials Market share plateaus +/- declines	Tried to reduce costs Management squeezes funding for new products to save cash	Improved efficiency/decreased costs late Weak marketing Poor distribution channels
Fast/flat structure	Promotion from within fosters group think	Failed to eliminate excessive bureaucracy	Organizations remain slow and sluggish despite change
Culture	Few norms rewarding high performance; no feedback systems; easy going	Mechanistic systems foster loss of commitment; not results oriented	Employees not enthusiastic about jobs; no praise for performance; no job security
Talent	Extensive management changes Hired weak managers	Management talent is uneven Key human capital leave	Hired Improved management team

Table 3: Turning point; failing to climb.

Source (Joyce & Slocum, 2012, p. 189)

Those winning organizations, as described above, are persistently devoting their efforts towards competencies, added value strategies and work, and on instituting a performance oriented organizational culture. The top management in these organizations chooses high caliber and talented candidates to fill positions identified as adding strategic value, and they reward them differently based on their accomplishments and performance returns to the organization. They also spend substantial time and effort on developing “talented managers through the use of mentoring programs, rotational assignments, and external training programs” (Joyce & Slocum, 2012, p. 190).

It is possible that using performance management systems to drive TM might be the solution to winning the “war of talent”. As advised in a study on the subject, in order to win organizations need to impose: customized performance-based “individual development plans (IDPs)”, performance linked challenging assignments, prospective progression openings based on performance, and performance based rewards schemes that are also inclusive of “contingent rewards” (Herman, Gottfredson, & Joo, 2012, p. 613).

### **Behavioral competency-based Human Resource Management**

Using behavioral competency-based HRM systems and practices are on the increase in organizations, with evidence being available of their ability to produce more reliable results. Using “behavioral-based assessments” can be of great impact on TM practices, right from talent selection to talent development and designing succession plans. These assessments includes chain of business related “simulation” that can highly predict how the person will act in these situations (Newhall, 2012).

### **Succession management**

We have previously argued that one of the most critical factors and major milestones for having an effective TM program in an organization is to identify successors for key positions and leaders. It was reported in a research study on succession planning that this can be achieved by creating a “leadership development program”, which can contribute to developing a succession plan that will enable the organization to translate its strategic plans into reality. The “leadership development program” should be created by assessing the current abilities of the identified potential leaders and customizing learning & development programs that are suitable for them, which also should be aligned to the TM objectives which themselves should be designed based on the organization’s needs (Hor, Huang, Shih, Lee, & Lee, 2010, p. 539).

### **Talent analytics**

Employing analytics to serve TM can positively affect the processes and results of the program. It can provide organizations with resourceful information on TM that wasn’t available earlier, by data mining and analyzing data on human resource’s influence over various organizational performance factors. When used skillfully, these analytic resources can be of a great return and use to the organization. On the other hand, if the organization is not capable and ready for using such a tool it will not add any value. Having a clear policy, process & procedures around talent analytics, as well as being clear about how its outcomes will be applied, are the most important components to appropriately utilize talent analytics in any organization (Lewis & Heckman, 2006, pp. 147-148).

Since humans are often the most important resources of any organization and the leaders put them at the top of their priorities, knowing more about how effective are the talented employees and other human resources available in the organization, and what is the best way to employ them, are all very important matters. Providing such information can be facilitated by creating an infrastructure that offers “real-time HR”, through an entirely integrated set of TM “applications”. That will ensure the HR practices that feed in to TM such as performance management components and development, will be “on time”, more robust, live, and always a “click away” rather than being annual or seasonal events that are managed manually or separately (Corsello, 2012, pp. 29-30).

### **Other prospects**

To address the TM issues at the macro level, some countries decided to respond to the "war for talent" through Education, and other intellectual and political solutions such as were implemented in Singapore. As the researcher of the study mentions that “the governing philosophy is therefore a system that nurtures its most talented, whether local or imported, to achieve their full potential while educating them so that they are conscious of an obligation to help ‘level up’ the rest” (Ng, 2011, p. 267).

### **Summary of chapter**

This chapter has defined talent, TM and the main concepts associated with them. Then, the current process and practices of TM were discussed. Next, identification of the major barriers to TM that are relevant to the study were explored. The chapter also included exploration of nationalization’s main highlights and how to approach it. Finally, a set of future concepts and practices in the TM field have been demonstrated.

---

**Methodology**

---

**3.1 Introduction**

This research examines the practical implementation of TM in one of the most dynamic and competitive work environments in the UAE, the banking sector. The objectives of the study are to identify the applied TM practices, issues of TM effectiveness, TM best practices adopted, how UAE national talent is being managed, and what could be the optimal way forward in TM.

This chapter clarifies the methods used to conduct the study, and describes the participants and the procedures followed. The dissertation was one of five studies contributing to a report commissioned by the UAE Federal Demographic Council on TM. This study on the banking industry covers the same subject and uses a similar semi-structured schedule of interview questions as the other studies, and the sample of interviewees drawn from this organization includes a number of locally well-known organizational practitioners of TM.

A descriptive qualitative approach was adopted in this research to form the case study. By using “in-depth interviews”, wherein the interviewees were asked about the current status of TM and their ideas about it and how it should evolve, while probing to get sufficient information for the study (Yin, 2009). In deciding what was the most appropriate model to use here due to the nature of the topic, which is subjective and descriptive, the researcher was influenced by the fact that the data available on TM are inadequate for conducting a large scale country-level or banking industry quantitative study.

**3.2 Limitations**

The number of companies that actually have TM departments and practice it in the UAE are limited, and the TM concept is still vague and confusing to most of the people which made it a difficult but significant research mission for the researcher to clarify the exact concept of TM considered prior to the interviews. During the interviews the researcher had faced language difficulties with two of the participants, since the questions and the interview were conducted in English. This problem wasn't recognized earlier or anticipated even due to the participants' senior position in the organization and level of work experience. The researcher was able to resolve the situation easily by instantly translating the questions into Arabic for the participants and continuing these interviews in Arabic language.

### **3.3 The study background**

The research was carried out in a bank which will be called “Excellence”. It is one of the leading international financial organizations in the UAE. Excellence has been operating in UAE for over 50 years and it provides financial services that cover both consumer and corporate clients. It operates through a diverse work force with more than 2,000 employees from different backgrounds including UAE nationals whom represent more than 40 per cent of the staff strength. In addition to the UAE, “Excellence” is present in 4 other GCC markets.

The researcher chose the organization “Excellence” for the case study based on the varied approaches they have adopted to managing talent, especially the identified talent amongst nationals. The broad scope of the organization and its two decades of experience with aspects of TM meant that the select organization was somewhat distinguished amongst the other financial institutions in UAE.

Another reason was their openness and willingness to conduct this study in their organization with their employees. And their eagerness for the study’s results to know if they are on the right track in terms of TM practices, and to use the study as a means of feedback and for generating recommendations for further development and improvement.

### **3.4 Sample**

The aim of the study was to explore participants’ views on managing talent in the UAE and specifically in “Excellence”, and also to consider these issues specifically in contexts of nationalization linking it to managing talent and national talent development.

The selected study participants were experienced banking professionals from different departments and across functions, with different length of service, and working at different levels in the organization hierarchy of “Excellence”. Several of them were part of the talent program in the organization, and others were leaders at a decision-making level whom could influence the TM program.

A total of 15 staff participated from departments such as: HR, Operations and other business units. All of them had volunteered to be part of the study that took place in two of the organization’s premises. The sample also presented a mix of nationalities, which ranged between Arabs, including UAE nationals, and western expatriates. This diverse sample, in terms of background, level and years of experience and fields, was chosen to capture a diversity of facts, ideas and opinions on the talent program in the company and on TM in general. The overall intention was to avoid any particular bias in perception by drawing on a wide range of individual backgrounds and work responsibilities.

### **3.5 Interviews: structure and content**

The purpose of the initial interview with the Talent Development Head was to assess and validate the fit of the organization as a relevant exploratory site and sample for the research study, and to examine if it has the potential to be a worthwhile case study on the subject. The interview questions were drawn around the same outline as the studies in the construction and retail industries and the government sector.

A schedule of interview questions was agreed by the supervisor and colleagues working on the Federal Demographic Council funded project on Talent Management in the UAE. The author of this dissertation utilized these questions, flexibly adjusting them to the needs and interests of the interviewees.

The schedule of interview questions covered such topics as: How is talent identified and classified in the organization, what are the talent management processes and procedures they have, how do they treat and look after national talent, and what are the different roles and responsibilities they took to create an environment that fosters talent and who takes part in that.

The interview questions designed for the study structure were divided into two major sections. The first section aimed to capture the participants' overall views on TM in the U.A.E., within the organization and across the organization's financial sector, as well as their views on Emiratization & national TM.

The schedule of questions went over several subjects from the employees' point of view, such as: the talent concept and definition, talent motives and challenges, the talent pool in UAE and in the financial sector, the effect of Emiratization policies on talent management, and the national talent pool versus expatriate talent pool.

The second section of the questions grants an in-depth insight on the previously mentioned areas, exploring the talent practices in the organization and how they are measured and monitored. As well as the TM department, line managers, senior managers and other employee's roles and responsibilities towards managing talent. Lastly, the interviews drew to a close with questions about the interviewee's recommendations and further comments on the prospect of TM, challenges facing it, and what steps can be taken to facilitate it.

The interview questions were semi-structured, consisting of a combination of both open-ended and closed questions with related sub-questions as the topic required. The researcher's background of being an experienced interviewer helped obtaining the required information from the interviewees, and in explaining the subject in a manner that suited each interviewee's understanding.

The interviews each started with general questions to break the ice; the researcher then addressed the topic in the previously mentioned manner and sequence of the interview, using examples and probing whenever required. The interviews were designed as individual interviews that could be covered within one hour, and the actual interviews were all a minimum of 40 minutes and a maximum of 60 minutes.

### **3.6 Data Collection (procedure)**

The researcher identified "Excellence" for this case study research based partly on a recommendation and network referral, during the search for an organization operating in the UAE that sets a good example in the TM field.

Accordingly, to establish whether "Excellence" demonstrates a good sample and if it poses the required characteristics for the research questions, basic information on the organization were collated such as: the number of employees, the number of UAE national staff, the existence of a talent program in the organization, etc. Then, the network referral linked the researcher to the "Head of Talent Development" in "Excellence", whom was cooperative and accommodating, and an initial screening interview with him was conducted prior to starting the interviews with the other 14 participants.

The permission to conduct the interviews was obtained by the Head of Talent Development from the top management including Head of Human Resources, whom had to be met by the research supervisor, in order to get the required acceptance from the organization to participate in the study. This took almost a month from the date the conversation was established with the Talent Head. Afterwards the Head of Talent Development contacted a number of employees, to check whether they were willing to participate in the study. He managed to gather the required 15 participants for the study, including himself and the Head of HR.

Once the interviews schedule was finalized, the questions of the interviews were e-mailed to the 15 participants. This was done deliberately to prepare them for the interviews, and to give them better idea of the interviews subject and objective in advance. The interviews took place over about 10 days (including the two initial interviews), all were scheduled as back-to-back, one-to-one interviews. These

interviews were conducted in one of “Excellence” premises meeting rooms for ten of the participants. The eleventh interview was held after that due to the participant’s availability. Three interviews were completed prior to the other set of twelve interviews, on several different days and in two premises. Based on the participants’ availability whom where senior managers and executive leaders, and three of them were met by the research supervisor due to the researcher’s unavailability at those specific times.

All of the interviews were audio-recorded and the participants’ consent were obtained before each interview by the researcher. A few of the participants expressed their concern about discussing the subject on records and specifically within the organization’s context. But the researcher explained to them that the individual interviews would all be kept confidential, and the data gathered would not be shared within the organization, rather, an overall report that doesn’t specify or disclose any of the participants’ identity or link them to their answers, would be shared with the organization two months later.

The researcher started the interviews with biographic questions and general employment questions to “break the ice”, and then moved on to the method questions. On average most of the interviews took around 40-60 minutes and a few exceeded 60 minutes.

Consequently; once all the interviews were completed, the audio files were converted into transcripts by a professional transcriber. And after reviewing the transcripts, the researcher shared them with the participants respectively and confidentially to check them. Only a few responded with requested changes and amendments, and these transcripts were then finalized.

The whole process of completing the interviews took almost 5 months, between the communications with the Talent Head, the internal management discussions and approvals, the meetings schedules with the senior managers and key stakeholders. It took up some period of time to get the interviews scheduled and conducted, which were extended and distributed initially over a couple of days and then longer due to the participants’ and the researcher’s schedule and availability.

The following chart summarizes and shows the procedures and progress of the study:



**Chart 1: Methodology procedures flow and timeline**

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

The data were examined pertaining to the overall concept and practices of TM in then U.A.E., then on to TM in the financial sector specifically, and to Emiratization and national talent afterwards, and finally, to the future prospect of TM.

The data collected showed in the transcripts, the audio records, the participants demographic data and the information collected on the organization, along with the researcher's notes were investigated and analyzed to arrive at the research findings. The links and common and contrasting themes between the individual participants in the study sample and across the general findings was interpreted and taken into consideration as well.

### **3.8 Data Validity**

To validate and check the data collected during the study the researcher used expert validation and triangulation of the coding of the transcripts across several researchers working on the FDC study. One expert review was the initial interview with the Talent Head, to ensure that "Excellence's" experience with TM was likely to produce a representative case study of TM systems and practices, as explained earlier in this chapter.

The second test was running the transcripts through the participants to validate them, and the fact that the study was duplicated in couple of organizations by other researchers on the project using almost the same instrument but in other UAE industry sectors.

### **Summary**

This chapter has described the methodology used in this study to examine the current practices in the TM area, the effectiveness & limitations of these practices, and future directions. It went through the methods used, the study sample specifications and characteristics. The procedures taken to conduct the study, and the limitations and obstacles that confronted the researcher during the study were considered and discussed. It also briefly covered how was the data validated and how it was analyzed which is detailed in the following chapters reporting the main findings and their interpretation.

---

### Analysis

---

This chapter reports the data analysis and discusses various interpretations in the light of the literature review the first part describes.

The context of the study and gives "voice to the participants" reporting some of their opinions and ideas on the subject of the study The second part discusses the participants' perceptions comparing them to scientific studies.

### Data Analysis and Results

#### 4.1 Background

“Excellence” is a financial banking institution. Talents employed in Excellence and its talent management program were examined through this research to understand more about the activities and developments in talent management practices in the UAE banking sector.

The data were collected through 15 interviews with 15 participants; these were all audio recorded and transcribed. Then, the transcripts were analyzed within the context of the research objectives and questions.

#### 4.2 Case study questions, structure and design

The interview questions were structured to acquire the data that served the research objectives. The questions concerned the interviewee's perception & knowledge on talent & talent management concepts overall, current processes and procedures of the talent program in their organization and elsewhere in UAE, and the future prospects of talent.

### 4.3 Biographical data on the participants

To further understand the sample of interviews used for the research; the table shows details of the participants' age, position, and rank, etc.

Table 4: The interviews participant's demographic

No.	Position	Tenure (years)	Nationality	Age Range	Level
1	Head of HR, Middle East	3 years	Arab	35-40	Managerial level
2	Regional Head, CBD Hub - MENA& PAK(customer diligence&KYC)	+2 years	Arab	35-40	Managerial level
3	Branch Manager	2 years	UAE	30-35	Mid Managerial level
4	Manager - Client service Group, Global Corp. Customers	7 years	UAE	30-35	Mid Managerial level
5	Regional Head, Financial Market Ops - MENA & PAK	6 years	British	35-40	Managerial level
6	Head of Employee Relations	3 years	UAE	35-40	Managerial level
7	Finance Manager	5 years	UAE	25-30	Mid Managerial level
8	Cluster Head - Branches, Dubai & NE	8 years	UAE	40-45	Managerial level
9	Associate Director, Financial Markets Sales	10 years	UAE	30-35	Mid Managerial level
10	Ops Risk Manager	9 years	UAE	30-35	Mid Managerial level
11	Branch Ops Officer	7 years	UAE	25-30	Non Managerial level
12	Managing Director, Head Global Markets UAE	+2 years	Arab	45-50	Executive Managerial level
13	Regional Head of Corporate Affairs (MENA & Pakistan)	+2 years	British	35-40	Managerial Level
14	Head of Talent Development, Middle East	5 years	Arab	35-40	Managerial level
15	Head of HR, UAE & Middle East	3.5 years	Australian	30-35	Managerial level

### 4.4 Limitations

The participants responded to the questions based on their knowledge and views. A few of them were not very aware about the subject being discussed due to their knowledge, or they were not adequately pre-prepared for the interview session although the objective and subject of the sessions were communicated to them well ahead of time before the interviews were conducted, and the schedule of questions was shared with them for them to be able to prepare in advance.

Interviewee number "4" faced significant language barriers and experienced difficulties in understanding the subject, although the interviewer translated and explained to the interviewee each question at the time of the interview. Even so, she could not get the grasp the idea of it adequately at the time. Thus, she could only comment or respond to part of the questions, and in some instances, not at all.

### 4.5 Participant's' views

The participants' responses to the interview questions and opinions are reported and categorized in this chapter. The list of interview questions is available in the appendix.

## 4.5.1 Macro Context

The first part of the interview was designed to elicit the general knowledge and views of the interviewees on Talent Management in the UAE and in the banking sector. A further nine questions covered Emiratisation and national talent management.

Questions one, two and three, mentioned below, were on talent definition, who is involved in defining talent in UAE, and how are TM's agenda and directions formed and focused.

### 1. What is talent? How is it defined in the Emirates?

The figure below displays five of the participants' replies to the questions, representing their view of what talent means.

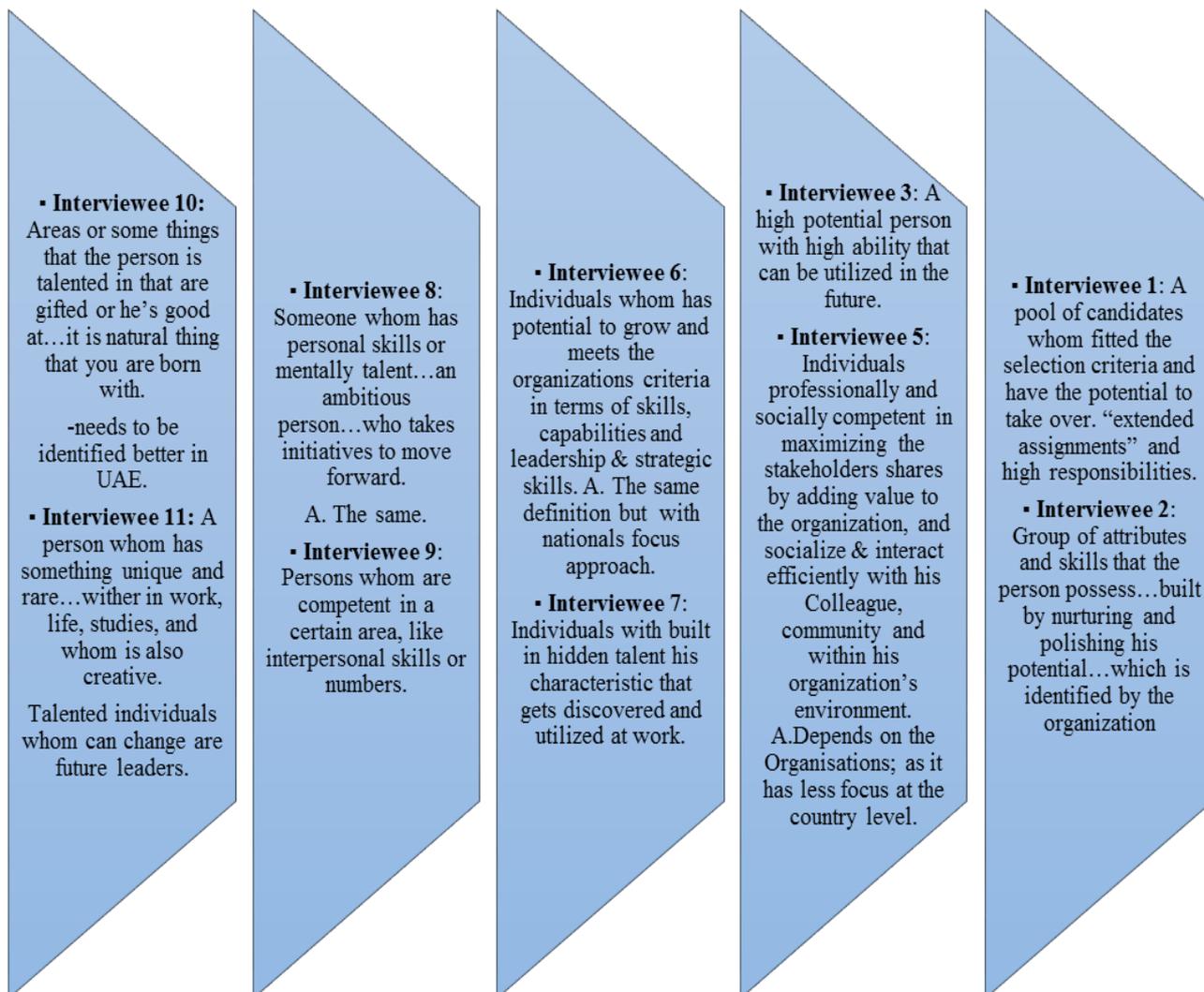


Figure3: Participant's view of talent

2. Who defines talent in the Emirates?

The interviewees believe that organizations, individuals and governments, among another couple of parties mentioned below, define talent in the UAE.

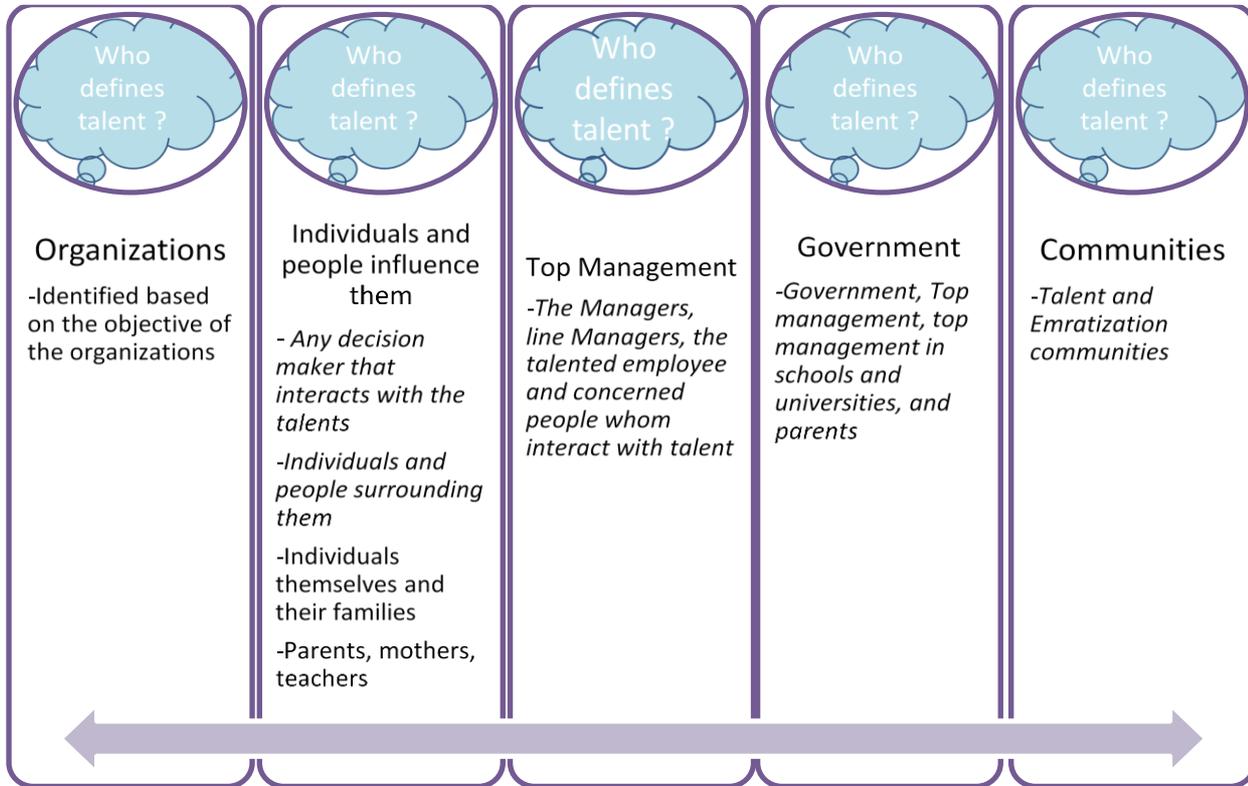


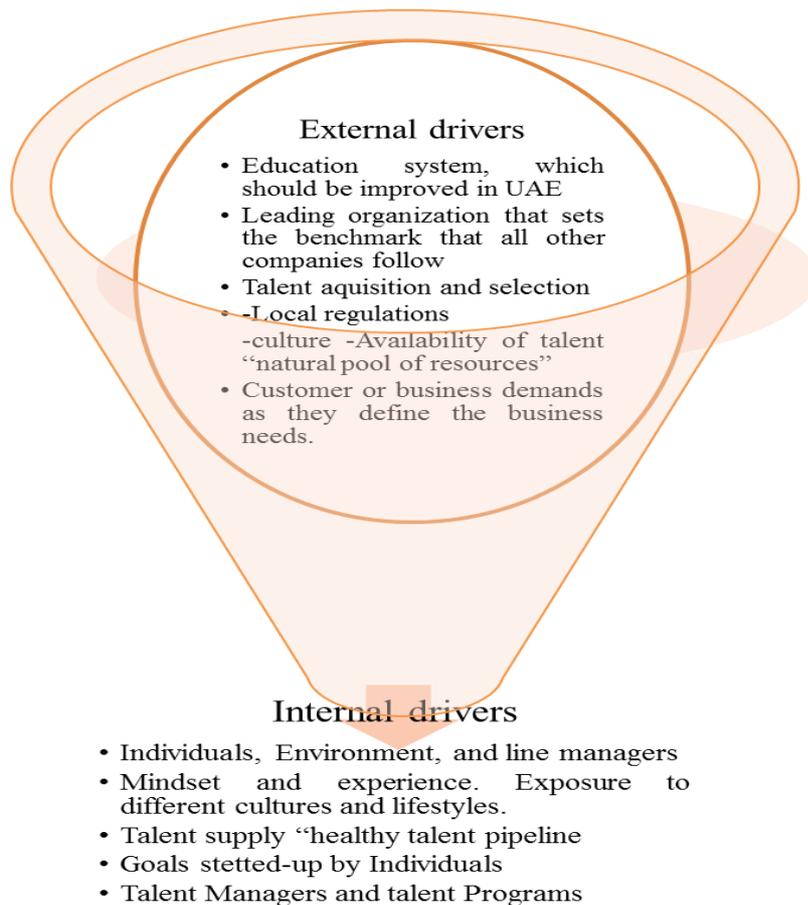
Figure 4: Talent identifiers in the participant's

Additionally; interviewee one specified who defines TM in “Excellence” as mentioned below:

“Talent Management Department, the HR Department and in collaboration with business, we define the talent framework, the talent criteria as well as talent development progress ...”

3. *What drives talent management initiatives (external vs internal drivers) in the Emirates?*

Extracted from the responses to this question; the figure shown below summarizes what could be the factors that directs TM, internal or external.



**Figure 5: Talent Drivers**

The fourth question on the interview schedule was about TM, and specifically its challenges in the UAE that the interviewee is aware of:

4. *Are there any challenges facing talent management in the Emirates?*

Difficulties that TM programs experienced were covered across the sections of questions within the subjects discussed, the following two remarks by interviewee one and nine illustrate some of the major challenges of TM. One of the issues defined by interviewee one is managing the talents “expectations” during and after the TM program, as they might assume it will lead to immediate outcomes such as getting promoted instantly:

“I think the challenge is always is on the expectations, right. You develop someone and then expectation is that now I went through these programs, through these rotations, through these meetings and through these learning

and now I am ready to move on and sometimes the opportunities are not as fast as the expectations of people. That always has been the challenge but you manage that through talking to people, talking to them about expectations, how to think about it, when to find the right opportunity”.

The interviewee nine mentioned that, in her view, stability of talented resources and employing them are the key challenges in TM:

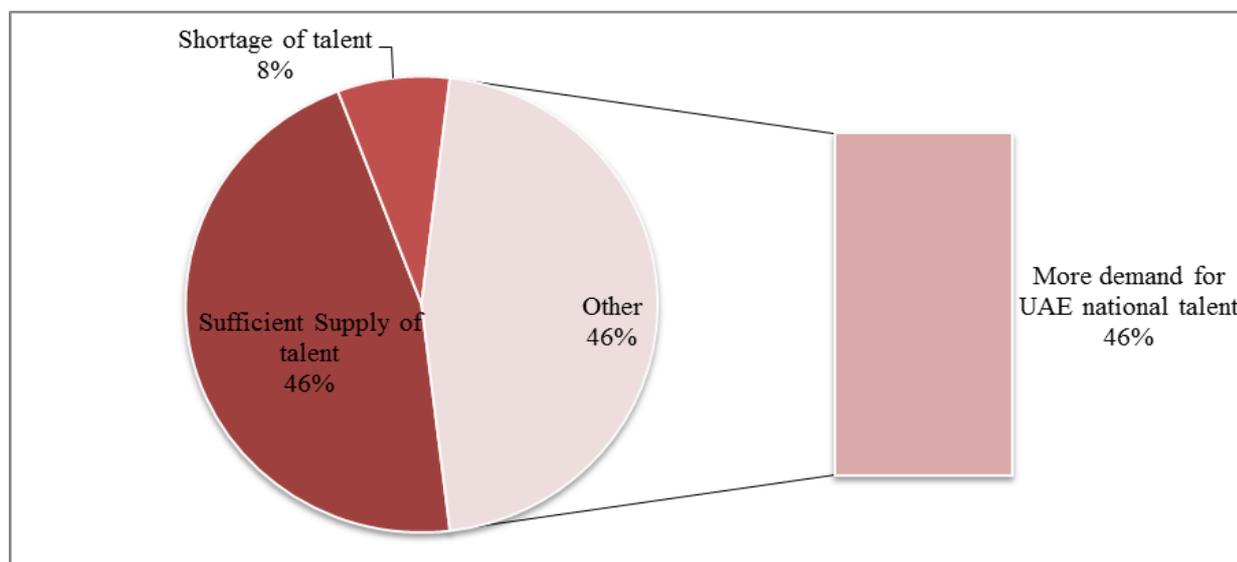
“I would say not sticking to for a longer period, maybe only challenge ... there are jumpers from each organisation. So it is just like, let me take the cake and I will run away, I will take some other cake and will come back, this is how they think about it. So maybe we have the main challenge, the talent and acquisition, they might face it in the future”.

Next, the questions assess the interviewee’s awareness about UAE and the banking sector’s talent pools position, as shown in questions five and six:

- 5. *What is your assessment of talent supply and demand in Emirates?*
- 6. *What is your assessment of talent supply and demand in your specific sector of work?*

The diagram below symbolizes the evaluation of the talent supply and demand according to the interview accounts given by the interviews. It shows a positive view on the availability of talent generally, and an illustration of national talent scarcity:

**Figure 6: Talent Supply and Demand**



To obtain further insight on talent shortage; we explore interviewee. four's view on this matter, in which she links her perception of the existence of talent shortage to what she also sees as a challenge facing TM, i.e., high attrition:

“There is no enough talented people because there is a challenge or problem of attrition. They leave...They move a lot. So this is the current problem ... they will be grooming an individual. It is up to him. He needs to build his skill. If not maybe he is focusing for something like salary or position”. Accordingly; the issue is mainly about the competition between the companies that raises the demand on them, and talent being limited resources, their frequent movements creates a shortage and high attrition in the market.”

Emiratization and the role of TM in the UAE under the influence of Emiratization policies in UAE was attended to in questions seven and eight:

- 7. *What do you think about representation of locals versus expatriates in the Emirates?*
- 8. *What do you think about the Emiratization policies?*
  - a. *What is the role of Emiratization in management of talent in the Emirates?*

The participants answered the two questions together based on their level of knowledge of the subject, commonly mentioning that the population in UAE plays a big role in causing the representation of expatriates to be higher than nationals. On the effectiveness of the Emiratization policy and its effect on managing TM in the UAE, the figure below shows the result that the majority are in favour of the policy.

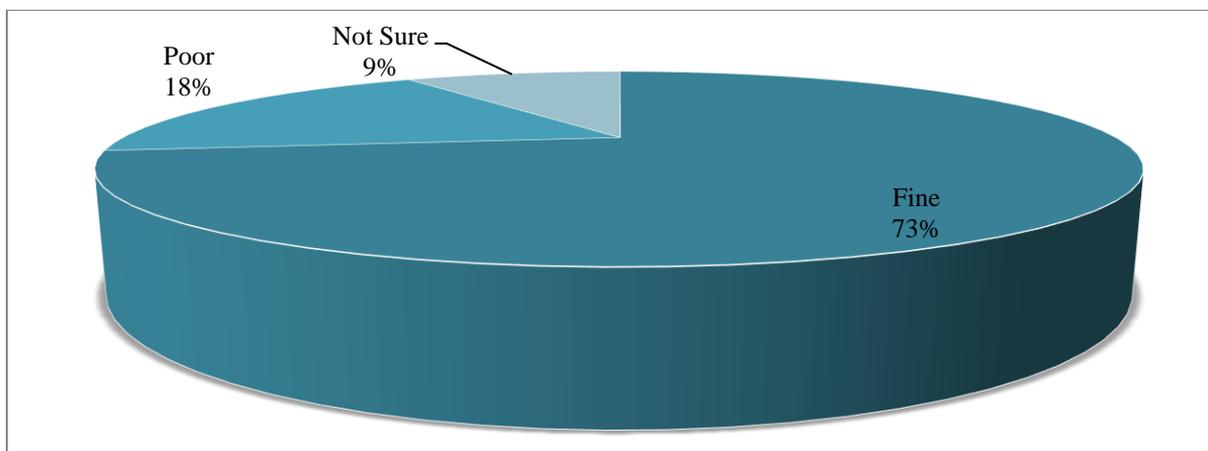


Figure 7: **The participants' view of the Emiratization policies**

Interviewee 5's thought about the policy reflects the voice of several interviewees whom weren't in favor of the policy; as he states:

“I think the... hiring managers; I think they got the wrong cultural mindset. So I don’t know whether the UAE enforces in a different way or tries to make it more dynamic or less soft cut and drive that this is the percentage that you need to get ... There seems to be just a focus on let’s get a UAE national because we need one. For me that is not the way to go. There is no incentive for the hiring manager to find any quality; they are just meeting the percentage. So consequently I think there is a focus just to get people into the industry no matter how good or bad they are or whether how good or little experience they have”.

In contrast, many of the people in favor of the policy, thinks that the policy is a good practice to have but needs to be further enhanced. They thought that the policy as it is today won’t be able to support the future of *Emiratization*. Interviewee 7, mentioned that he thinks positively of the policy although he has a limited idea about its capabilities due to the lack of solid assessments of the policy’s affect:

“See, it helps, it helps but I cannot say like up to which degree and how because we have not seen any statistic or comments on that but it helps because it is an enforcing rule and the number of organization to fulfil that they are doing it, at which level that is another thing.”

Similarly, interviewee 11’s opinion on the Emiratisation policy is positive but feels it requires development:

“Needs to improve more although it is working ...I know after couple of years ...may be after 10 years I know that there will be huge difference between now and then. It is also if we go back 10 years the Emiratisation was not that much, there was not that strong relationship but it has been improved and lot will be improved.”

Lastly, this section of the interview questionnaire has ended with a general question on the best practices of TM in the UAE that the interviewee have come across:

9. *Are you aware of any good practices for managing talent in the Emirates?*

Very few of the contributors in the research could comment on this question, giving many of the examples that were embedded or prompted by the previous interview questions.

## 4.5.2 Organizational Level

The second section of the interview tackles TM and Emiratization in depth at the level of the organization.

Firstly; it gives further insight into TM and particularly TM's definition, strategy, then the TM program in the organization, practices, policies & procedures are addressed in questions one to nine.

Questions 1-4 highlights how is TM defined in the organization, the parties involved in shaping TM strategy & program and what are their duties & roles in managing talent:

1. *What is your organization's approach to management of talent?*
  - a. *How is talent defined in your organization?*
  - b. *Who shapes this approach?*
2. *Whose (individual vs department) responsibility is management of talent in your organization?*

The first part of the question was addressed previously during the interview thus it is skipped in this part. The second part of the first question and the second question; with regard to “who shapes the talent approach and responsible of TM?”

Answers were common among all the interviewees and are demonstrated in the figure below:



Figure 8: Interviewees' shared viewpoint on who is responsible and shapes TM

All of the participants shared the same views; that the organization's TM is shaped and run by the TM team, Top Management or Line Managers and the talented employee.

3. *Do you have particular priorities for managing talent in your organization?*
4. *Do you have particular talent needs in your organization?*
  - a. *Key talent shortages/needs*
  - b. *Horizontal and vertical representation of Emiratis/expatriates*
  - c. *Turnover*

Since several of these questions were addressed previously in the interview or combined and covered with other sections they were skipped at this point. Some of the interviewees due to their knowledge couldn't comment on all of the points raised. The points a, b, and c, are further discussed in questions five and six.

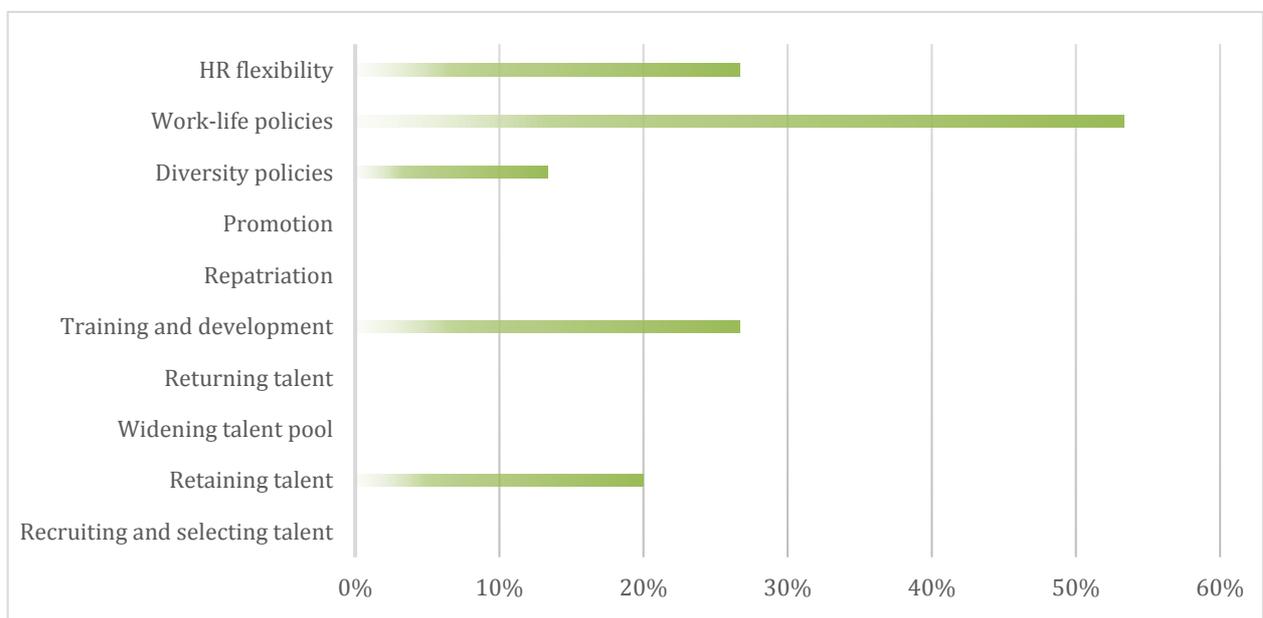
The major highlights for answers to questions 3-4 were that there are sufficient talent in the financial sector, there is a need for senior UAE national talent, and the turnover among the TM pool of the organization are within norms and is being closely monitored.

Questions 5-6 demonstrates the current practices, and policies and procedures or "measures and monitoring mechanism" in the organization.

5. *Can you please tell us about the current talent management **practices** in your organization? (What you do)*
  - a. *Recruiting and selecting talent*
  - b. *Retaining talent*
  - c. *Widening talent pool*
  - d. *Returning talent*
  - e. *Training and development*
  - f. *Repatriation*
  - g. *Promotion*
  - h. *Diversity policies*
  - i. *Work-life policies*
  - j. *HR flexibility*
6. *Can you please tell us about the current **measures and monitoring mechanisms** that you use for talent management in your organization? (How you measure/monitor).*
  - a. *Recruiting and selecting talent*
  - b. *Retaining talent*

- c. *Widening talent pool*
- d. *Returning talent*
- e. *Training and development*
- f. *Repatriation*
- g. *Promotion*
- h. *Diversity policies*
- i. *Work-life policies*
- j. *HR flexibility*

The answers of the participants were on a few of the above mentioned topics based on their awareness of the subject, interest or experience and selecting what they had not covered earlier; as shown in the chart below:



**Figure 9: Talent Management practices in the organization**

A selection of statements of the interviewees on a number of the above mentioned topics that are related to the research objective, were as follows:

### **Training & Development, Retention and Repatriation**

Interviewees 3 & 5 remarks gives us more insight into the learning and development function in “Excellence”. Based on interviewee 3’s answer we learn that one of the practices is creating individual development plans (IDPs) for talented individuals, as part of the learning and development practices that they follow, and he mentions it is formed based on:

“A concept of 70-20-10. 70% is on job training, 20% is observation, 10% classroom. So IDPs done on yearly basis and they review it one in six month. IDPs ensure that person’s development and training has to cover these three parameters, which is mainly line managers sitting with the person. But as you understand, line managers might get busy with other responsibilities, so the person also plays a big role”.

And interviewee 5 listed a few of the current development programs:

“We have an IG (international graduate) scheme which you have heard about so it is again fostering talent from degree level into the bank. Again mandatory all Arab nationals, speaking Arabic and so on. So I think it is important. We have a lot more concentration on UAE, we have the local training scheme. I think it is called as Al MASAR scheme and that is focusing on future leaders in particularly UAE nationals. We got the future Arab leadership scheme which is looking out key talents guys and key senior people, looking the future Middle East leaders. That is actually not just Arabs that is also mixed with expats as well. We have, I don’t think this is across the other divisions, but we have a sponsorship of undergrads scholars program where we sort of interview and ask undergrads to apply from scheme and then we sponsor them through university, hopefully come and join in bank.”

Whereas on retention and repatriation he said:

“From an organisational level. If someone is coming to you and say they have been offered 20% more in another job, you have already lost the ball...trying to answer that question or prevent that question from coming off way before the event. So again making sure that we engage these talented people where they are, making sure we have got good managers managing them and they are thinking of their career. Making sure they are engaged so they feel valued, they are motivated, they have a career and opinion that counts in the bank that is important. Again we give them leadership training or networking opportunities to be able to take the initiatives themselves and implement what they learn or utilize their network to find better roles or move within the bank”. Which shows that the organization adopts a proactive, not very financial oriented approach of employee retention.”

And his comments on repatriation or mobility are evidence on how the company is utilizing its international coverage and existence in leveraging its employees’ experiences and development which also adds value to the company and its talent program:

“Mobility within the bank is a lot better than any bank I have worked in within four banks. This one is by far the best. So you could very easily move to probably about 30 to 50 countries in the world and there will be a job that you could have transferable skills or already have experience of and quite easily move there...You just find that your horizons has totally changed, you think a lot more strategically, you understand cultural differences.... So you learn those skills, you learn how to drive the people. Consequently indirectly your social abilities and communication skills naturally increase. I think that mobility is quite important.”

Interviewee 10 described his experience and the process that he went through in the TM program as a talented employee that summarizes the programs and offering of L&D to the members of the talent pool;

“ The line manager let’s say nominated me as a ‘highpo’ but then that’s it. The second step is you have the learning

and development team who make sure that I have all the necessary tools and guidance so that I develop myself. I got into some training, we get opportunities to do networking with the senior management. We get opportunities to go for events, again we meet very senior managers within the organisation or maybe people from outside...I have a sponsor, a very senior manager within an organisation who is sponsoring me basically her role is to guide me on what I am good at. We went on all my strengths, how do I use those strengths in my training work. I picked up like few things that I would like to do in the next let's say 6 months like different projects that I want to be involved, which is not within my normal work, it is something additional that I want to do, which again will help in my knowledge and learning experience so I am working on those.

I am having other opportunities within my unit where I train people, I mentor other people within my unit or other units. I also have a mentor besides the sponsor. His role is to discuss issues that I would like to discuss with him and he guides me accordingly on how do I get to go around and improving some of the areas that I find difficult. Maybe handling a situation with someone or something that I want to work on and he can guide me on some trainings that I can do. So there is a very good system and it is working perfectly for me. It is being monitored...and every 2 years you have to go again for the qualification. You have to earn to be there also, which is good. .. I really like it and I am sure it will help me in the future.”

He also briefly mentioned the similar program that targets UAE national talents:

“We have also the Al Masar programme which is specially designed for all UAE nationals...and this whole programme...they get to hear about people who have been in the senior level, they share the experience, they share their views. So it is good for them that they get to hear about all the other segments within the bank. Sometimes it is not easy to know, it is a huge bank, how would I know what is consumer banking is doing. So this is one way where we get to know the other”.

## **Performance Management and Diversity**

Since Interviewee 6 was part of the human resources team and employee relations manager, she could share various practices that were carried out by the organization and the HR Department. In performance management, which is part of her responsibilities she mentioned that:

“I conduct regular training, one on one workshops. I call it performance improvement plans workshop, trying to change the mindset of the line managers and then I meet with the employees and trying to change their mindset and moving into the best approach in terms of managing development and improvement where the focus should be on regular one on one, regular feedbacks, proactive tips and not reactive tips”. Having a dedicated person directing & controlling performance management and employee relations shows that the organization is highly performance oriented.”

And on diversity, work life balance policies and HR policies on flexibility she said:

“Excellence” is a very focused bank in terms of diversity and inclusion. We have a Global Head of DNI. We have the teams managing across the globe managing the agenda of the DNI. Flexible working policy is part of the agenda. We believe in work life balance and we have policies in place including sabbatical policy. We have working reduced hours, reduced days and working from home. Of course implementation at country level is based on minimum standards of local regulation. For example, in the UAE working from home is not possible as per MoL regulations but we could reduce hours. So we created an addendum to the global policy but this was done in our continuous effort to ensure that we create a work life balance for our employees. So we do have a reduced hours, we do have sabbatical leave, again within regulations. So if the group sabbatical leave is 6 to 12 months, we have kept it to 3 months based on local regulation”. Thus, we can notice with a dedicated team to look after diversity and nationalization internationally or “DNI” as the interviewee calls it highlights the importance of diversity to the organization, and flexibility as well considering that they have created a solution to accommodate the different needs of their staff without compromising on complying with the ministry of labour “MOL” regulations.”

In Questions 7, 8 & 9 we attempt to have the interviewees share their evaluation of the effectiveness of the organizations’ TM program and how it’s affected by the Emiratization practices:

7. *How effective are the current talent management interventions in your organization?*
8. *Do you have any stories of successful talent management interventions in your organization?*
9. *In what ways is your organizational talent management strategy is effected by Emiratization?*

A limited number of participants commented on these three questions, partly due to the fact that a few of the previous questions in principle had already addressed these questions. A couple of answers to the questions were as follows. Regarding question 7; interviewee 10 thinks that the TM program in his organization is effective and persuasive for him:

“I am talking about my perspective, it is working really well. I feel more motivated, I am not even applying for jobs. I have not applied for a job for so many years. I think mostly it is because of my manager, honestly speaking. You have a good manager, you have a person who motivates you, who supports you, who pushes you to be your best, you are going to be amazing”.

On the success story, interviewee 8 mentioned that there are many success stories and successful examples of the organization’s growing talent:

“There are many people who came in the organization and who left the organization because they want to expose themselves to different organization or a different entities or different role...We have known people who started from Teller, now they are Heads of Operation. They are doing something totally different. They develop within the organization themselves. Look at lot of people who came as Management Trainee, today they are managing

the branches, they are managing people, they are going through the program, they are very young. Then you know couple of years down the line they will be in a different level as well.”

Since question nine was covered earlier, not many of the participants commented on it. Interviewee 9 noted that the Emiratisation policy was particularly situated in the context of the organization’s application of TM, thus it had become more effective:

“We started now hiring smartly especially the young talent or young Emiratis. We don’t just hire because we just want to hire or just to reach to the quota. So now they are thinking about it from a different angle.”

Secondly, Emiratisation and factors that influence Emiratisation in the organization were discussed in questions one to four.

1. *Are you aware of any stereotypes and biases about Emiratis and expatriates in your organization?*
2. *How do you assess the attitudes of line managers towards Emiratis and expatriates in your organization?*
3. *How do you assess the attitudes of senior managers towards Emiratis and expatriates in your organization?*
4. *How do you assess the attitudes of non-managerial staff towards Emiratis and expatriates in your organization?*

Figure 10 below indicates that more than 60% of the interviewees think that there are biases against Emiratis, 27% thinks the opposite and 6% couldn’t or didn’t comment

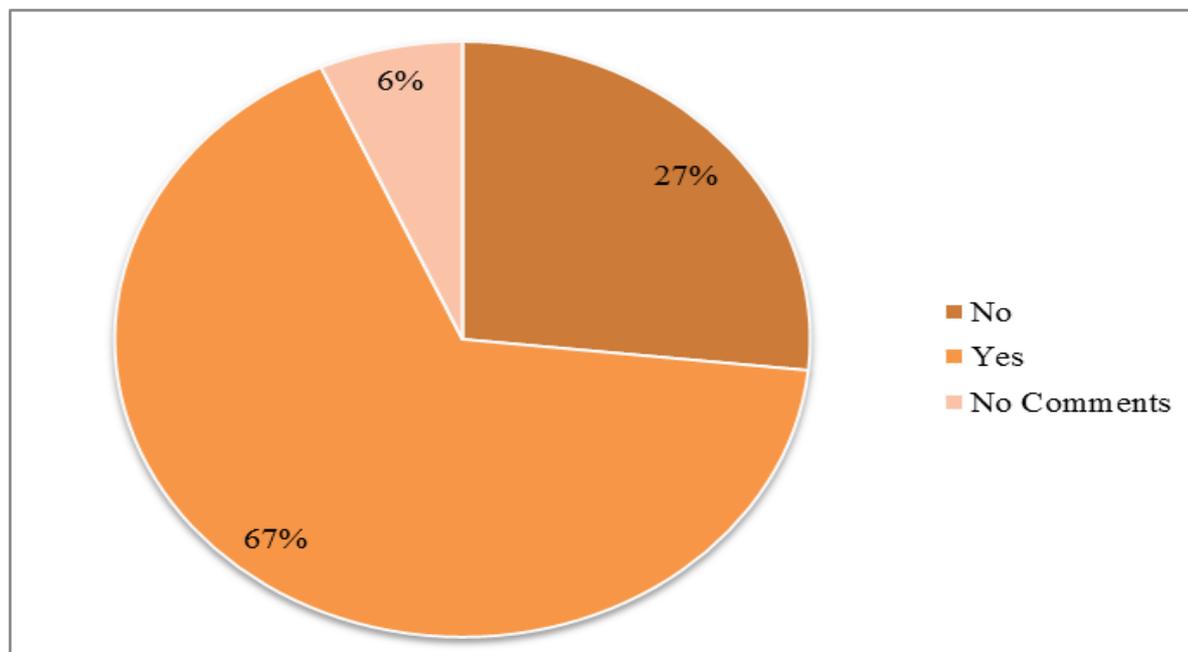


Figure 10: Existence of stereotypes and biases against Emiratis

Participants' replies to questions 2-3 are illustrated in the figure below. These clearly point to the main source of the stereotypes and biases as attributable to line managers or mid-level managers.

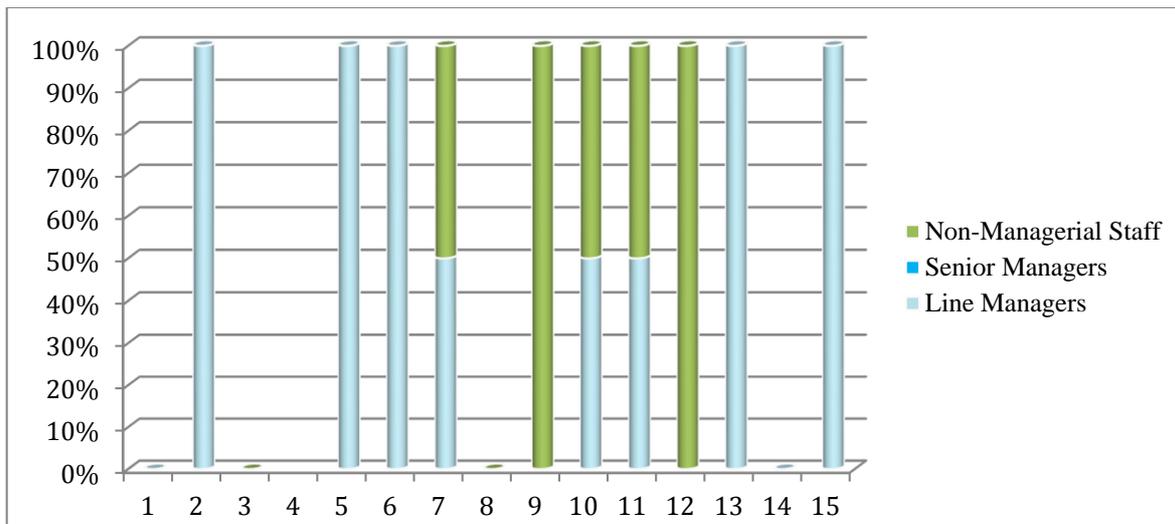


Figure 11: Stereotypes and biases against Emiratis

Some of the participants' ideas and reasons given explaining these stereotypes and biases against UAE nationals, in their opinion, are listed below:

Interviewee 1 thinks that the stereotypes against nationals are in the form of their interests in the public sector versus the private sector and in terms of nationals' higher wages:

“Like any other nationalities, right. So any nationality, you have generalization that takes place but generalization normally get broken quickly by identifying or seeing the difference within that population. For Emiratis, the sense sometime that look an Emirati wants to do a Government job... because less hours, its bigger money. That’s probably an issue and we call it stereotype. The stereotype that Emirati is usually more expensive than an expat. That’s stereotype but it is not necessarily true. I know nationals get paid less than some expats. So it is not true but in general sense probably a stereotype... It is the matter of culture of the organization. If the organization accept why it is important to have a national with us. Then you don’t face any of these issues. Depending on the culture of the organizations...So we have to maintain the diversity...That is something built in the culture. So if the line manager come and recruits only one type of nationality, they usually get spotted and get talked to because they are living the value of the bank.”

Interviewee 5 points out the problem and a possible solution in his opinion:

“I still think we need to come up with a more formalised recruitment process. The reason I say that is we don’t so dependent on the hiring manager because... hiring manager can dispel or reinforce that stereotype depending on their selection.”

Interviewee 6 (employee relations manager) briefed us on her experience of managing biases against UAE nationals:

“If you look at why these stereotypes are there or perceptions I would call them, it is because of the few individuals who don’t represent the Emiratis in the appropriate manner. If I generalize, it will be on attendance and sickness absence. They are viewed as employees who would always have issues with attendance and would have a lot of sickness absence but this is because of few who are there in different departments. Once we started to set the standards right, this stereotype has been removed completely because managers now have the confidence to manage these issues through following the standard disciplinary procedure and they have seen our support in terms of cases where it was persistent breach of policy, continuous breach of policy, issued the three warning letters and termination took place. So when we started to show them that there is a system in place, don’t be afraid of managing the typical issues. We will support you provided you manage appropriately. They have seen the results over the past 3 years. They trust both internal and external system and you have seen those who have been the reason for such stereotypes, either shape up or shape out. They leave after being pressured. You see that this stereotype view has changed to a certain extent, in terms of performances as well because we stopped hiring unqualified individual for roles. We are helping the managers to move away from perception that Emiratis don’t like to work. Again I tell if we have 40%, 5% are the reason for this stereotype and this perception. So we are managing this 5% here who have ruined the reputation of others.”

So interviewee 1 & 6 views part of the issue of stereotyping as created by some of the Emiratis whom gives a wrong or bad example about the national work force. On the contrary; the interviewee 8 mentioned that he had heard rumors about the biases but didn’t wish to express his opinion on the subject and said that:

“I have heard them and this is just a rumor people tell me. I don’t know to what extend I should believe but so far I haven’t, technically directly I haven’t heard that...People hear a lot of rumors. What you believe depends on what you want to believe and who gives you the information. Technically I just come and do my job. I don’t try to get into somebody’s nose. I just do my job and get out. That’s it...It is a healthy environment...We get along with everyone. We do everything together. So far I haven’t witnessed it and I cannot talk on everyone’s behalf. Everybody will probably experience something. Everybody will be subjected to something different. I haven’t.”

Whilst; interviewee 10 speaks about her experience and opinion on stereotypes and biases against nationals, as a UAE national stating that; “It is everywhere. The thing is I hate it when people say, oh you are one of the few locals who work hard, I hear that all the time, oh you are the one of the few locals who is smart. Did we even give them a chance. Yes, I have to fight, I had my moments, I felt really down but then I don’t know how I find myself, I never quit...it helped me and then paid off in the end. It is easy to get a job, if this is not working out ...I just go somewhere else. Why should we let those people feel that way, why should we leave it until somebody wants to leave, it should not be that way. It should be proper from day one.”

### 4.5.3 Future Prospects and Recommendations

To conclude; the interviewees were asked about challenges and obstacles that they anticipate might obstruct the development of TM in their organization. The first question in this part is:

1. *Are there any challenges facing the future of talent management in your organization?*

Most of the interviewees thought that there are possible challenges that might face talent management. This can be seen from the answers which are categorized in the figure below:

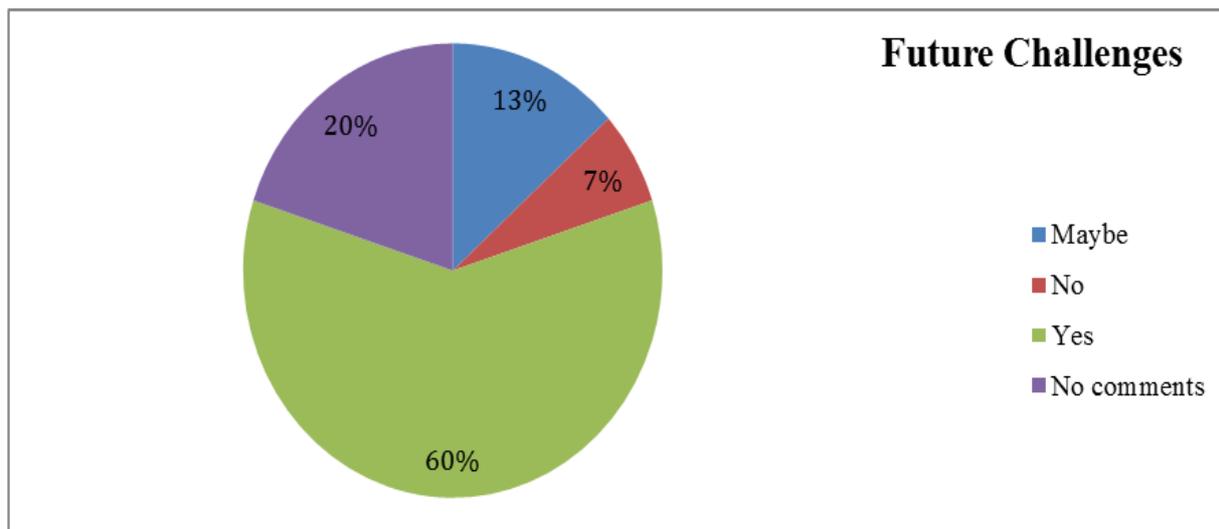


Figure 12: **Challenges in the future of TM**

We can notice that 60% of the interviewees were certain about the challenges and 13% thought that TM will more likely have to overcome some obstacles to progress, so in total 73% of the participants foresaw that TM won't progress smoothly.

Three participants couldn't comment on the subject though; due to time constraints or they couldn't determine whether there are challenges or not and what are they. While one participant didn't see any challenges from his point of view.

Furthermore; the potential challenges that the majority of the participants predicted would appear in the talent management development journey are summarized in the table below:

<i>Interviewee Number</i>	<i>Future Challenges</i>
1	Younger Generation of employees.
2	Talent Selection and UAE national talent development & career growth.
3	Sustainability on the long run might be an issue.
5	Scarcity of UAE national talent.
8	Retention and stability of talent; they tend to move very fast now according to the interviewee. Also; growth and career progression opportunities availability for talented staff.
9	Talent acquisition and retention.
10	Discovering and nurturing talent at early age, and at country level.
11	Effectively deploying talent at the right place, “you have to find them a good place” as the participant says. Post identifying and developing those talented employees.

**Table 5: TM development challenges**

In short; the challenges that the participants identified were around acquiring and selecting talent, their development, retention and sustainability. The interviewees saw these practices as still in the development stages and will need to be further enhanced. Other challenges anticipated by the interviewees were the limited young talent pool that will need years to reach the desired level and have the right leadership skills, and the scarcity and limited pool of national talent.

Nevertheless; interviewee 6 was optimistic about the future of Emiratization, as she mentioned that: “I think it will be a positive future, especially if we are focused on changing the channels, the typical channels that we used to hire and changing our mindset, changing our approaches, being more creative in our approaches and selection criteria...And the challenge would be in changing the career fairs, the national career fairs...and becoming more creative in conducting these career fairs. Today if we typically enter any national career fair, it is all about stalls, brands and jotting CVs. This is how I view it. We need to have structured career fairs. .. I need to have a vigorous selection criteria and not just stand there, take CVs and throw them, take CVs and shred them or just end up with boxes of 1000 CVs that requires filtering. ... The brand is established. Now you need to move towards how can I get the best out of these career fairs. ...I think there should be more structure to it and agenda in place and results should be monitored. What happened after this career fair.”

Highlighting that to improve the present Emiratization position, there should be a shift in the Emiratization approach and its current practices.

Subsequently; the interviewees were asked on what possibly the government, organizations, individuals, and other parties could do to help TM succeed in the UAE. Questions two, three, four and five were:

2. *In your opinion, what could government do to promote effective management of talent in the Emirates?*
3. *In your opinion, what could organizations do to promote effective management of talent in the Emirates?*
4. *In your opinion, what could individuals do to promote effective management of talent in the Emirates?*
5. *In your opinion, what could other stakeholders do to promote effective management of talent in the Emirates?*

Not all of the participants could comment on the entire set of questions or determine the roles of the above mentioned parties. Their overall answers to these questions are demonstrated in the chart below:

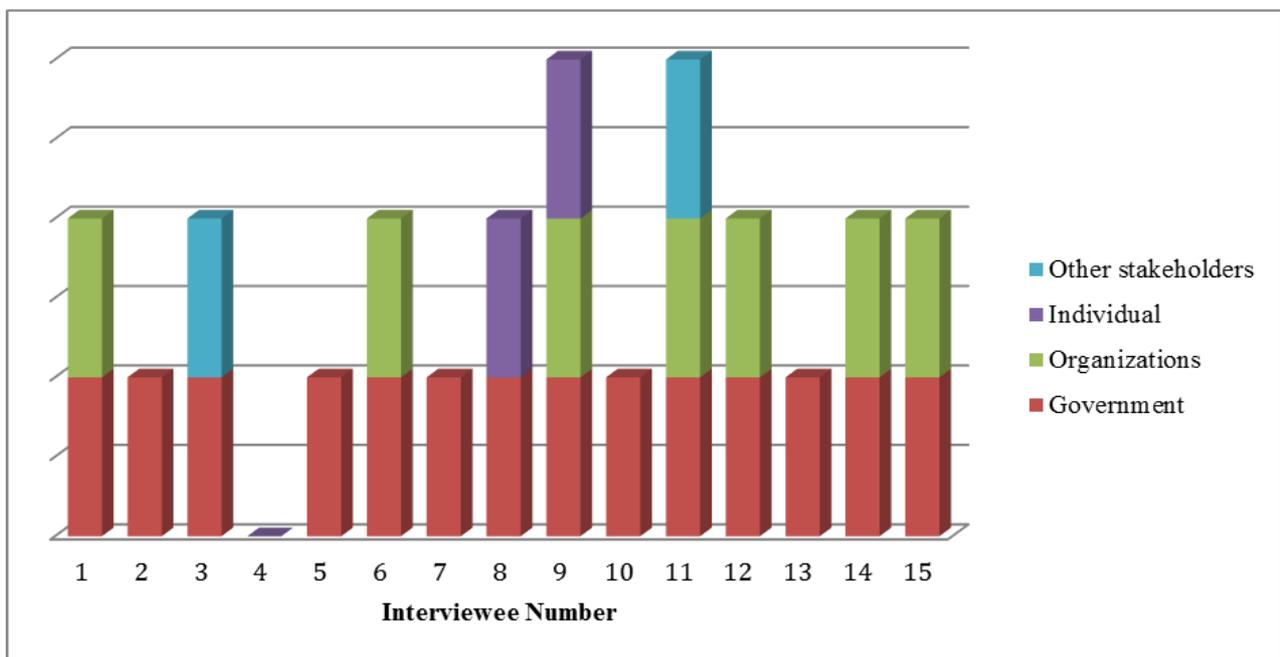


Figure 13: Roles of Government, Organizations, and others in TM

We can observe from the chart above that from the interviewees’ points of view, the Government has the largest part in TM development followed by organizations.

Moreover; the main comments on these questions are exhibited in the table below:

<i>Interviewee Number</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>Organizations</i>	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Other stakeholders</i>
1	Should play a bigger role and implement more initiatives to effectively manage talent in UAE.	Already performing a sufficient role.		
2	Should organize more the country wise talent management, and offer better programs for national talents.			
3	More programs to look after national talent; such as talent consultants.			External bodies, other programs that can sponsor talent and nurture them.
5	To have plans that meets the future requirements and needs.			
6		Change the typical hiring channels.		
7	To discover and foster talent right from schools and universities. To guide and consult the students & their families, on which area or subject is best for the student to pursue at their studies and work.			
8	Identify and nurture talent at the country level and make them available for all.		Give the process its time and spend time in developing themselves.	

Cont....

<i>Interviewee Number</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>Organizations</i>	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Other stakeholders</i>
9	Enhance the Emiratization policy and help grow & develop more senior locals.	Organizations and line should find the answers for the following questions and implement the solutions or answers: what motivates talent? And how to retain them?	Have stable careers	
10	Better development plans			
11	Utilize the country's talent differently to help build the country.	Create some opportunities for the talented employees. And not to limit the development of talent to the current available opportunities.		More talent management programs and projects

Cont....

<i>Interviewee Number</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>Organizations</i>	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Other stakeholders</i>
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborate with organizations on providing trainings and Internships to make the students familiar with the work-life environment and jobs fields.</li> <li>- Offer secondments in association with organisations.</li> </ul> <p>Meaningful and effective implementation of the Emiratization policy rather than the current quota approach and take the policy implementation to the next level.</p>	<p>Educate people on the organizations' achievement in talent and Emiratization fields.</p>		
15	<p>Enhance the Emiratization policy.</p>	<p>Create Forums and committees for talent management.</p>		

**Table 6: Role of Government, Organizations, and others in TM - Participant's comments**

Several of the interviewees noted that the expectations of the government and its level of support are high specifically towards nationalization. As interviewee 1 mentions on the role of the government entities:

“You will never have one form of talent management of policies and procedures because each organization do it differently. Now from UAE national perspective, I think TANMIA and all these organizations can play a role in preparing nationals and engaging with organizations to prepare the foundation for nationals and so on...”

And interviewee 5 also sees that the government needs to put much more effort into making the Emiratisation policy and initiatives effective; giving Singapore as an example, he said:

“They need to answer the numbers problem. Try to fix the lower levels of education and again I think if they are particularly interested in doing finance industry then I think they should be working in partnership with companies rather than being bit more dynamic than just slapping percentage on it. I think it should be bit more dynamic on that. Like I said focus on quality because people take the easy way out in anything you do right. So you give them the option and they will take it. It needs a bit more tighter....I will take Singapore for example. If you were in Singapore like 50 years ago, this country had nothing going for it. I mean it really really did not, it did not have any natural resources, did not have any people, educational levels were very bad, standard of English and so on. They are now like per capita top 5 richest countries in the world. They have built up through a system of encouraging population growth, In fact it went too far the other way there are too many people so they have to bring it back and now it is gone too far the other way. They have got a high degree of local talent about the same time good mix of expat but only less than 10% of expat. Consequently now in the construction industry for example in Singapore it is all made of locals with great engineering degrees with some of the universities are best in the world....It is very similar to UAE. My opinion is very cut and dry and obviously it is a whole wealth of social and economic problems that come with this but if Singapore can do it, anyone can do it. You just need the right person, the right setup, they got a very obedient population I have got to say. Which we have not got in western market. You have got so much social problems, social housing and drugs and so on in western market. It is very tough to do with countries 100s years old whereas Singapore is a new country, it is easier to do. Yeah I think there is no reason why any government cannot take those policies maybe alter that slightly and do something the same, giving 40 years.”

On the initiatives that the government needs to take to further nurture national talent interviewee 10 said:

“I think ...the number one problem is that we don't have places where we could send the younger generation to develop themselves. We see in another countries, there are lots of extra curriculum, it does not have to be things like sports or arts, it could be even learning math, learning science, make it in interesting way like they are actually going to do the experiment, something that could open their eyes, make it more interesting for them to learn. .... Most of the things that are here are for profit and not everybody gets to go and I think also awareness. If we make parents to be more aware of to find out the importance of identifying the talent in their child, more and more kids. The parents would pay more attention of what the kids are capable and may be they can try to focus more on their talent...The human resource department for the government right maybe another segment to be a talent

management. They could run some workshops. It does not have to be for free. Like we have the “high po.” programs. These “high po.s” they could probably be monitored by the government, something could be done, we should not rely just on the organization, yes we are potential, what else we can do outside that organization. Maybe we could be given some projects to do, some assignment which would benefit the country or a community or anything. There should be something that could help us be more aware of other things than just our organization because who knows tomorrow I am going to do something else....I should have more options and another way of having more options and being able to do more is through this talent and increase in knowledge and awareness on what is going on”. Which were again comments on enhancing the education system and launching special initiatives to foster UAE national talents.”

And interviewee 12 supports interviewee 10 in his opinion by stating that the government needs to invest more in education and specifically so during the early stages of schooling:

“I do hope that they refocus some of the attention toward the guidance and counselling they give to the young generation. In order to get the right type of education into the young generation. This problem cannot be solved overnight and will never solved overnight. That is why I kind of slowed down over here and became more selective and decided to take the entry point approach rather than let’s hire seniors. Panic is bad. It costs you something, it costs a lot and usually it is expensive. I am not talking about lost generations, I am talking about certain change in strategy where we are talking about the next decade about the next generation being put in the right direction which is allowing to the country strategic direction, agenda whatever you want to call it. So you end up with more qualified people. The second thing is that usually, I don’t know where which part of UAE you come from but usually my knowledge is that people away from where the wealth accumulates i.e., Dubai and Abu Dhabi are more hungry working towards better lives. So it is not because Dubai or Abu Dhabi have the money then the best resources will come from there. I think the government needs to invest even more in the Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah and the remote areas because those people need the job much more than the guy in Dubai. The access to job is easier for someone in Dubai than someone from Fujairah or Ras Al Khaimah or those areas. So if you put the right education infrastructure you will get people who are slightly more hardworking then the city people from those areas. Those guys know to do better in their life. I know it from where I come from. I am Lebanese. The schooling system there is much better than over here. It is not much better because this is how it was created, it was much older. Here we are talking about schools that have been there for 150 years and stuff like that, 200 years. So they are well established. You see that the quality of education eventually everybody goes back to the city for their college studies because there are less universities but the schooling system is equally good in all areas. When you end up going to University the mix of the people, you see people coming from the remote areas compared to the ones from the city. So those guys have a bigger incentive of doing better in their life than the guys who are sitting in the city because they have less opportunities.”

Sharing his own country's experience as an example to point out that advanced education available for all the population will help the country and its talent to progress. One solution is a partnership between the government and the private sector to resolve the Emiratization issue. Such collaborations can contribute collectively towards the implementation and success of Emiratization, as recommended by interviewee 13:

“I think there needs to be some great public private partnership corporation. I think Bahrain is great example why that is happened. I think there needs to be some understanding or some rebalancing of what you can do in the public sector and the private world bank or how you need to benchmark whether it is salary development, or whatever. Companies need to be out very clearly articulate what is they offer those in the public sector. We have to go out and doing that report that have given you better, it is not that easy. I think also there needs greater transparency within the government sector of what is that and go actually around the financial sector. Because it is the game of the numbers at the moment and realistic is it that you want 42% of your staff employed in the banking or is it you want 20% in banking but you actually wanted at senior influencing level. Because 20% in a senior is going to be far more influential on your future economic productivity then 42% on more junior level. So I think there needs to be some rationalization around how the numbers are played. I think there just needs to be greater transparency even within our sector,...their numbers differently...I played the example of how they outsourced to avoid the issue. What is it you really need to go over on a level playing field. If you are going to be targeting the locals which I think it is a game of Numbers, the first bit has been around having regional nationals and moving towards attracting locals. We have got to make sure we have got the right customer base in place which is going to attract the right people to want to work for us as well...how certain types of customers and if we have those we know what attracts them and ... work for it as well, which will then allow us to grow our businesses sustainably and manage a sustainable talent pipeline.”

While interviewee 15 suggests that the government needs to implement the Emiratization policy differently to changeover its current negative affect to a more positive and effective program:

“I think Emiratization drives the wrong behaviors in the industry and with line managers. So I think that's the key, but I appreciate why it's been put in place...what could they do differently? I I think there needs to be a lot more...around how do we how do we create role models within the industry or within sector ... but people who've worked very hard to get where they are. And if you look at someone like Sheikha Lubna, for example ... you know highly regarded. We brought her here to speak to our UAE national women...you know you could argue she's come from a very privileged background. Of course she has. But the difference is that she has worked very very hard.”

Finally; the interview ends with a request for further comments on TM in UAE, if the interviewee would like to add something that they have missed to mention in the course of the interview.

6. *Would you like to make any additional comments on talent management in the Emirates?*

As a courtesy question to close the interview and in case the participants had omitted to mention any matter that they would like to mention with regard to TM, but most of them didn't have anything to add as the questions were comprehensive, and few of them asked about the next steps in the research after concluding the interviews.

---

### Discussion

---

#### Data and Results Discussion

In this chapter the data analyses are interpreted and explored with reference to the previous literature review and discussed within the UAE HRM context. The data analysis sections were designed to address the research objective and questions, divided between three major aspects as shown below.

The research mainly addressed the three mentioned questions below:

##### 5.1 Question one:

**How is “Talent management “practiced in the banking sector? And does it cover and concerned about national talents also?**

To answer this question, the research problem was explored across three areas, which are:

##### 5.1.1 Talent Management concept evolvement and definition

It was established from the results that most of the participants view or define talent based on their knowledge or experience with the organization’s TM program; as high performers, individuals with high potential whom can grow and succeed are given greater responsibilities to lead in the future. The individuals distinguished as talented are based on the organization’s criteria, top management, government bodies and other influential individuals.

TM is also steered by external factors such as governmental regulations, the education system, industry standards, and market demand. Internal factors are also important such as talented employees’ level of self-esteem, the organization’s TM program and influence of direct managers.

On definitions of talent interviewee 11 says:

“Talent is a person who has something unique and rarely could be in another person, it can be talent in different ways. It is not only in work, it is not only in life, sometimes in studies, they are also creative, I can see it talent as well. So something can make you different than people, something can push you up, it is a skill sometimes. This is how I define talent actually”. While interviewee one defines it in a very organization specific way being an HR professional he defined talent as : “select group of people that are potentially geared towards being easily developed and moving to roles that are very specific to organization”.

The CIPD (2011) shares a similar definition to that expressed by some the participants, stating that individuals contributing positively and highly to the success of the organization through their performance or high potential are considered as talent. According to Stewart & Rigg (2011) organizations define and acquire talent based on their business demand or need and supply or availability of talented employees within the organization.

Based on the participants' response it is evident that the organization adopts a combined methodology to fulfill its talent needs. It builds the internal pipeline using the available resources across the countries that are part of the organization and attracts external talent that could add value to the organization and support it in reaching a competitive advantage.

### **5.1.2 Current practices and Contemporary procedures**

Covering four main HR functions, the contemporary aspects of managing talent in the organization were examined in the study. This is consistent with a study by Meyers, van Woerkom & Dries (2013) that found that TM processes and procedures are integrated and implemented through the different HRM functions. The participants were asked about talent acquisition and selection, training and development, and talent retention aspects spread over ten topic areas. Overall, the study outcomes show that the participants mainly commented on 5 areas of TM methods applied in "Excellence". The 5 most commented on topics were: work-life balance policies, HR flexibility, training and development, retention, and diversity policies. Thus, the collected data were mainly around talent development, retention and, more briefly, on acquiring talent.

#### **Talent acquisition and selection**

To acquire talent, the results demonstrate that talents and talent pool members are selected internally from within the subject study organization and recruited externally. A few studies highlight the importance of building talent pipelines from within the organization, which makes talent development a priority and connected to talent selection (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). Other studies focus on employing talented individuals whom are ready to add value to the organization with their current proven skills & capabilities, rather than developing individuals with prospective growth abilities which might not come to effect soon enough. With the priority of this approach being on attracting talent externally, Meyers, van Woerkom, & Dries (2013) note the desire and competition between organizations to be the "employer of choice".

“Excellence”, as has been shown, has adopted a combination of the two approaches of acquiring talents internally and externally, in order to achieve its objectives in the TM program. A combination of global and local resourcing fits the organization’s objective, culture and style of work as an international organization and it provides opportunities for employees across the countries it operates in. This confirms that the organizations’ methods of talent acquisition are benchmarked with the market and global practices in the TM field.

### **Training and development**

The analysis of the research data demonstrates that “Excellence” runs several learning programs at different levels. Some programs are for entry level and junior staff; the programs at this level combines classrooms and development curricula. They are mainly designed for UAE nationals or Arab talent since the company has mandates and requirements to meet its Emiratization quotas and the needs of Arabic-speaking staff. Other programs and developmental offerings are at the mid or senior level such as: on job training, special projects and assignments including assignments in other countries, mentoring, professional forums, and networking opportunities.

A mixture of the routine learning and development methods with special media tools like “mobility” are determined as excellent practice in grooming talented employees (Chabault, Hulin, & Soparnot, 2012). Accordingly, the recommended technique in the literature is followed by the organization that mostly fits its nature of business, culture and needs. Interviewee one gave examples of the company’s L&D offerings stating:

“We have our internal learning and development academy. So if we are identifying that we need to develop certain skill, technical capability in certain category of talent, usually the academy will develop the program and deliver it to them. If we say we are developing leadership capabilities, then people will attend those classes. So there are some fixed classes that are in the agenda where people that are identified as talents, they put their preference and put they their learning gap, and choose from those programs or they get place from those programs. So that the role of learning. We do lots of these coaching sessions; we do lots of strength finder sessions ... mainly by the learning team.”

At the time of this research, the company operates in almost 50 countries in the world, thus it had facilitated and eased the movement of staff among these countries as applicable making “mobility” one of its selling features as employer among talents, employees and prospective employees in general. On this matter, interviewee 5 mentioned:

“Mobility within the bank is a lot better than any bank I have worked in within four banks. This one is by far the best. So you could very easily move to probably about 30 to 50 countries in the world and there will be a job that you could have transferable skills or already have experience of and quite easily move there... You just find that your horizons has totally changed, you think a lot more strategically, you understand cultural differences.... So you learn those skills, you learn how to drive the people. Consequently, indirectly your social abilities and communication skills naturally increase. I think that mobility is quite important.”

## **Talent retention**

All the efforts taken pertaining to attracting talents, developing them, motivating & involving them are proactive retention measures that the organization adopted, as summarized in interviewee 5’s response on the subject:

“From an organisational level. If someone is coming to you and say they have been offered 20% more in another job, you have already lost the ball...trying to answer that question or prevent that question from coming off way before the event. So again making sure that we engage these talented people where they are, making sure we have got good managers managing them and they are thinking of their career. Making sure they are engaged so they feel valued, they are motivated, they have a career and opinion that counts in the bank, that is important. Again we give them leadership training or networking opportunities to be able to take the initiatives themselves and implement what they learn or utilize their network to find better roles or move within the bank”.

The same approach was found to be effective in other organizations as well specifically international organizations as Chabault, Hulin, & Soparnot (2012) learnt. They discovered that methods such as “mobility and rotation” are common instruments in retaining talents and utilizing them in different countries and areas that belong to the organizations.

### **5.1.3 Emiratization and national talent**

One of the statistics in the research shows that more than 70% of the participants think that the Emiratization policy is satisfactory. Through ideas like enhancing the policy and detaching it from quotas and being numbers-driven to more quality provided, better controlled and assessed against targets regularly, were part of the participants’ recommendations related to design and implementation of Emiratization policies. Further studies, analysis and proper review of the implementation and effectiveness of the policy are also needed as was emphasized by the interviewees.

In fact, a lack of sufficient information and assessment on unemployment rates in the UAE, as Al-Humayd (2010) highlights, prevents reserachers from calculating the exact effect of unemployment

among nationals on the availability of national hires and talents. On the policy evaluation interviewee 7 comments:

“See, it helps, it helps but I cannot say like up to which degree and how because we have not seen any statistic or comments on that but it helps because it is an enforcing rule and the number of organization to fulfil that they are doing it, at which level that is another thing.”

Respectively, this shows a possible gap between the existence of the policy and it being effective or valid. A lot of work still remains to progress nationalization and growing national talents in UAE’s in the private sector. Moreover; the literature cited in Al-Khazaraji (2010) states that: “... the policy is implemented by enforcing a precise percentage increase in national employee’s number in the private sector, 4% in the financial sector, which is monitored by governmental establishments that have been created to support the Emiratization initiatives such as “Tanmia” or “Tawteen”.”

Interview 15, commenting on the mandate, goes even further saying that the policy have a negative impact on TM and nationalization:

“I think the policies drive the wrong behaviors. I understand the intention. I think the intention is a very good one. I sign up to the reason behind why we do it. I appreciate that if Iran goes nuclear, for example, all the expats will leave, and they still need to run their banking. So, I understand intellectually why they do. I just think how they do it drives the wrong behavior’s. We count UAE nationals like they’re sheep. So it’s literally when we have our 2 reporting periods every year, 30<sup>th</sup> of June umm and the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, and the 4 weeks leading up to it... and it drives the wrong behaviors with line managers...so let’s say you’re not performing in my team, I’m not going to exit you. Why would I exit you? Because I’m not going to find someone to replace you, and ... I don’t want ...to have an organization where we don’t have productive people and where we don’t have people that are performing. I think that sends the wrong messages, and we’re really working hard to overcome that. So I will push a line manager and say ‘Exit them. I don’t care what nationality. If they’re not working, exit them. They’re not turning up if there’re sick leave issues, whatever.’ And they’re getting much better at that and ... line managers are feeling confident. But we still count we count them like they’re sheep, and it just so it goes against everything for me that talent is about.”

Nevertheless, other participants still have faith and hope in the future impact of Emiratization policy, interviewee 11 says the policy enhancement will take time:

“Needs to improve more although it is working ...I know after couple of years ...may be after 10 years I know that there will be huge difference between now and then. It is also if we go back 10 years the Emiratization was not that much, there was not that strong relationship but it has been improved and lot will be improved.”

Dealing with nationals merely as numbers, and as seasonal events that need to be considered at a certain time or audit points in the year, only defeats the goal of attracting and developing national talents.

National talent's interest and leniency towards the public sector were the major highlights in the Emiratization and national talent section in the study as a highly repeated pattern across the national work force.

Al-Humayd (2010) states that historically the public sector has been attracting nationals to be part of its workforce and still does, but nowadays due to the scarcity of job opportunities in the public sector this practice is diminishing, which means that more UAE nationals will need to be absorbed into the private sector. Matching the benefits in terms of leave periods, holidays and monetary benefits are major cost items that the private sector struggles with when compared to the public sector that will have to be adequately addressed for the private sector to attract national talent.

## 5.2 Question two:

**What are the challenges facing the “Talent management programs” in the banking sector?**

We can draw out from the previously discussed topics in the research results that the major obstacles that TM needs to overcome are as mentioned below:

### 1. Talents expectation

The employees once identified as potential talents starts building expectations about the growth, career development opportunities and financial rewards, which the organization might not be able to deliver part of or all of it. Interviewee 1 pointed out:

“I think the challenge is always is on the expectations, right. You develop someone and then expectation is that now I went through these programs, through these rotations, through these meetings and through these learning and now I am ready to move on and sometimes the opportunities are not as fast as the expectations of people.”

### 2. Attrition and retention

Interviewee 9 when asked about TM challenges in her view said:

“I would say not sticking to for a longer period, maybe only challenge ... there are jumpers from each organisation.”

With the high demand for talent and market competitiveness on acquiring the best talent available, some organizations offer very attractive deals to their desired talents. In some organizations, there are however somewhat limited opportunities for career progression which can create difficulties with retentions. These elements triggered a consistent motivation for talents to move between organizations.

### 3. Gaps in the Emiratization policy

The outcomes clearly indicate that the Emiratization practices and policies has had significant influence in shaping the agenda for national talent growth and employment, although the effects have sometimes been negative fostering a hustle environment that does not produce national talents as much as needed.

#### **4. Shortage of national talent and specifically senior UAE national talents**

Shortages occur due to the previously mentioned factors, such as public sector preference, unemployment, and the size of the UAE national population. The availability of national talents and senior national talents have been an issue as this study and the previous literature have revealed.

#### **5. Perception of the national work force**

Another factor that disturbs the presence of nationals and local talent in the UAE work force, and especially in the private sector, is the way that UAE national workers are perceived. They are accused of not being competent enough or equal to their expatriate counterparts. Such stereotypes affect the probability of nationals being employed rather than being developed to be tomorrow's leaders. Interviewee 10 is a UAE national who has dealt with such kind of perceptions and stereotypes, and said from her experience:

“It is everywhere. The thing is I hate it when people say, oh you are one of the few locals who work hard, I hear that all the time, oh you are the one of the few locals who is smart. Did we even give them a chance. Yes, I have to fight, I had my moments, I felt really down but then I don't know how I find myself, I never quit....it helped me and then paid off in the end.”

While interviewee five spoke about a possible solution for the problem mentioning:

“I think the formal programs are one way of trying to bring down the stereotypes. It will get a lot more exposure to senior people it is the good way as well. I think the mentoring scheme should work. I just sound like a broken record I still think we need to come up with a more formalised recruitment process. The reason I say that is we don't so dependent on the hiring manager because... hiring manager can dispel or reinforce that stereotype depending on their selection...I think if we concentrate on improving or formalizing the framework of hiring and maybe getting a bit more involvement of a broader range of people or more senior people in this hiring decisions then I think we can make the right decision there.”

### 5.3 Question three:

#### Future trends and directions

Future prospects and recommendations for TM were covered towards the end of the interview schedule of questions. A specific question asked was: **“What could be the advancement solutions of Talent management Programs in banks and possible ways forward?”**

In summary, the participants were asked about what could be the future challenges and best solutions to resolve them. The research findings suggest that most of the participants thought that for TM to develop and progress it needs to overcome obstacles in attracting and selecting talent, talent development, retention and sustainability, and coping with the shortage of available national talent. The literature suggested that one of the possible answers to talent attraction, selection and development are to start with designing a solid TM strategy, to adopt performance-based remuneration systems, and to create competency focused and performance-linked TM practices. According to Joyce & Slocum (2012) the characteristics of successful organizations are: organizations that focus on developing strategies to achieve their objectives of the talent program and are highly performance-driven with customized rewards schemes that enable them to effectively attract talents and manage them.

We can notice that in the organization under study a talent management strategy does exist, which is known to most of the interviewees, although their knowledge of the strategy terms and details differed and they often confused it with aspects of the process. This is supported by Interviewee 1’s comments on TM’s strategy in the organization stating:

“The strategy is that we define a 2-3 years plan based on the business strategy and then identify the areas where talent is needed, what type of capability is needed, and we have our internal assessments where the line managers nominate and assess and then when those people get classified as talent, they grow through different interventions to develop them, grow them and groom them for better roles and different roles.”

The connection between performance and TM is present in “Excellence”; whether it be either from TM policies and the fact that being part of the talent pool is driven by the talented employees’ performance considered equally along with their potential, or from compensation and benefits being performance based, or from TM practices like development being customized and based on performance. As was said by The Head of TM Program:

“We are a performance-driven organization. So our system and our reward policy is based on performance.”

On integrating PM as part of talent development, interviewee 5 mentioned that talent pool members: “goes on the performance management infrastructure so they will get rated twice a year. You get a performance rating and values rating and that defines obviously financially how successful you are. It also defines career path and how focused on as an individual in the organization”. Which shows great focus on individuals’ performance as part of TM structure and design in the organization.”

Competency based human resources practices as discussed by Newhall (2012) are valuable instruments to select and develop talent including designing “succession plans”, and the use of “behavioral-based assessments” that can predict how the individual will likely behave based on his past experiences. These competence-based methodologies are not being followed in the organization, or at least there is no strong evidence of “Excellence” having a set of competency based practices, and their performance evaluation is mainly based on values and performance. The tool to implement all of the above mentioned measures and to centralize talent programs around performance include: customized performance-based “individual development plans (IDPs)”, higher-level stretch assignments, higher job placements, and personalized remuneration (Herman, Gottfredson & Joo, 2012). These systems and tools need to exist in the organization since these TM measures can contribute highly to talent retention. It can be noticed from the participants that IDPs are being developed for the talent pool members, with different measures to develop them. Interviewee 3 mentioned on the creation of IDPs creation that they are based on: “A concept of 70-20-10. 70% is on job training, 20% is observation, 10% classroom. So IDPs done on yearly basis and they review it one in six month. IDPs ensure that person’s development and training has to cover these three parameters, which is mainly line managers sitting with the person. But as you understand, line managers might get busy with other responsibilities, so the person also plays a big role.”

In addition, preparing the organization to analyze and make the best use of its talent capabilities by studying the data on its talented employees, i.e. using Talent Analytics, as recommended by Lewis & Heckman (2006), is a great tool to predict future needs or current necessities.. The capacity to be able to provide instant information on talent accessible at any time by leaders and talent program stakeholders, delivers “real-time HR” according Corsello (2012), and is a critical component of ‘Talent Analytics’. Which haven’t been seen strongly as part of the current organization since the participants comments lacked information on talent analytics or system and as the interview’s questions didn’t address this aspect specifically or deeply.

Furthermore, planning for successors in all key positions through the creation of leadership development programs is a central part of many TM systems. Succession planning involves matching the evaluated skills of the potential leaders to the anticipated and needed skills sets and tailoring learning and

development schemes (Hor, Huang, Shih, Lee & Lee, 2010). Presently within “Excellence” it seems that they’re still developing their succession planning scheme and that it is still at a very early stage. Interviewee 6 shares his views and information declaring:

“So there are many efforts provided that we are given a feasible time frame, a practical time frame to do this stuff. You need at least 3 years to see the success of a succession planning, to see the success of a talent program. Anything less than that is not realistic. I cant create a talent in one year and promote the talent in one year and have them at managerial role. You need at least 3 years to groom and this is what we are committed to and this is what is giving us strength in our conversations with our local regulators. Our commitments to change the quality of this ratio.”

And interviewee 12 says on succession planning and nationalization initiatives being part of it:

“We have ways like succession planning and that type of exercises that we do internally, is not succession planning to make sure that if you don’t show up at work tomorrow someone is able to take your job no. It is about pushing people to develop the skill set of their subordinates to enable them to deliver in the future in bigger roles. It is not making sure that very likely if tomorrow I don’t show up at work they will go and hire someone externally but if I do the job I am doing for the period I am supposed to be doing which is around 3 years and I stay with the bank. My role is to try to develop someone from within the organisation to be able to take over from me. So this how it is suppose to work. When you are an expat in a role and something like that we do our best to hire a local person who is able to achieve. So basically it is about localizing while we move. Like for example when I left Bahrain, the guy who replaced me is a Bahraini, is a local. So that day, I know that bank has been in Bahrain for 90 years and this is first guy to do the job.”

This constitutes further evidence that can be interpreted as showing that the company is still at the starting point when succession planning is being considered, which might reflect on the number of opportunities created for talents, and which also will impact on the effectiveness of the nationalization plans. And above all addressing the growth and availability of talents country wide, specifically national talents, needs to start from the initial stages. This therefore includes improving the education system which is a top priority among other political measures that the country needs to take, as Ng (2011) highlighted in his study of Singapore’s experience and was also highlighted by several of the interviewees.

Many of the participants share the same thoughts as expressed by Ng (2011); wherein they see that the government needs to play a larger role in managing talent and nurturing national talent, to support the existence and growth of TM programs with the country whether in private or public sectors organizations. Interviewee 5 refers to Singapore’s model also saying:

“They need to answer the numbers problem. Try to fix the lower levels of education and again I think if they are particularly interested in doing finance industry then I think they should be working in partnership with companies rather than being bit more dynamic than just slapping percentage on it...Like I said focus on quality because people take the easy way out in anything you do right. So you give them the option and they will take it. It needs a bit more tighter...I will take Singapore for example. If you were in Singapore like 50 years ago, this country had nothing going for it...They are now like per capita top 5 richest countries in the world. They have built up through a system of encouraging population growth, In fact it went too far the other way there are too many people so they have to bring it back and now it is gone too far the other way. They have got a high degree of local talent about the same time good mix of expat but only less than 10% of expat...It is very similar to UAE. My opinion is very cut and drive and obviously it is a whole wealth of social and economic problems that come with this but if Singapore can do it, anyone can do it.”

Interviewee 12 also said about the government’s role in building the county’s talent:

“I do hope that they refocus some of the attention toward the guidance and counselling they give to the young generation. In order to get the right type of education into the young generation. This problem cannot be solved overnight and will never solved overnight”.

Thus, it can be seen that in UAE there should be more focus on nurturing talent right from school and there is an urgent need for more country-wide initiatives to lead the growth and development of the country’s talents. , There needs to be new government policies formulated and establishment of many more cross-sectoral activities in TM across the UAE over the coming years.

## **Summary**

In summary, in this section we have assessed the findings of the study, as expressed by the participants, and discussed in the light of the literature review presented earlier. The findings have been discussed across five main elements that touch on the essence and objectives of this research and its questions; which exemplify what we mean by talent and TM, how TM is operating at present, issues of localization and local talent, concerns about TM and finally probable forthcoming prospects.

---

**Conclusion and Recommendation**

---

**6.1 Introduction**

Investigating applied Talent Management practices in the UAE and particularly in the financial sector, this study examined how TM is implemented in the banking sector. A key issue was do they facilitate and nurture the creation of a suitable culture for UAE national talents to grow? Then, the research explored TM challenges, and ended with drawing a route map for TM in the financial sector that will encourage it to evolve and develop global standards of TM policy and practice.

Accordingly, the research findings were that:

Participants link talent to performance and potential, individuals are recognized as talent either internally by parties like the TM program owner or the managers or external bodies such as governmental bodies.

Individuals are brought into the TM program from the organization itself and externally to build the company's talent pool, the pool of successors, potential leaders and likely high contributors to the organization's success. Talented employees capabilities and skills are stretched with customized development tools, and these human assets are protected by the organization with customized and specialized employee retention schemes.

Within the context of the country's resources and the growing need for local talent as an answer to the potential risk of losing expatriate human resources to other countries, with the majority of the working population being foreigners many of whom will return to their home countries one day. The study addressed the availability, growth and issues facing the national talents in the country and in the banking sector in particular. It reveals a shortage in the national talent, concerns about the Emiratization policy that is considered the engine of the nationalization drive, and the efforts taken by organizations and their key employees in constructing the UAE national labour force and talent.

Identification of what are the areas of concern and battles that TM has to win to progress were also established in this research. The primary areas of concern found were managing talents expectations and dealing with what talented employees anticipate against what can be attained, how to control

talent's attrition and monitor their retention, along with challenging issues around Emiratization, scarcity and perceptions of national talent.

In relation to possible future implementation and directions that contributes to TM's evolution and sustainability, this dissertation research has discussed future focused solutions in talent acquisition and development such as competency & performance based TM & HRM practices, focusing on succession planning and talent analytics.

The above mentioned results assisted researchers and practitioners with knowing how TM programs are shaped in the banking industry, addressing such questions as does it foster a suitable environment to nurture national talent? What kind of obstacles exist in TM? And what are the suggested future trends & best practices? Feasible alternatives and answers to these questions, i.e., the outcomes of the study, were supported by and assessed in reference to the relevant studies of literature.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made to develop the methods, techniques and implementations to progress TM practices in UAE and the banking industry:

### **Talent Management concept evolution and definition**

1. The TM strategy of the organization should be built around the needs of the organization, addressing the reason for the existence of such practices in the organization. That strategy needs to be evaluated against the outcomes to assess the effectiveness of the strategy, process and procedures at the end of each TM program and amend them as is found necessary.
2. As part of the strategy creation, the organization's specific talent definition and concept should be defined consistent with the organization's objectives and purpose for having the TM program. It should be customized to fit the organization's need and culture, because talent practices copied from one company to another or from the books, without proper study to customize its application to the company might fail.
3. TM practices adopted and implemented without appropriate explanation to employees will create lack of staff awareness of TM's meaning, program and processes, which influences the

employee's expectations from the program. Employees should be familiarized with the organization's TM program through communication and awareness sessions on the concept. This involves explaining the process, criteria, eligibility and life cycle of the TM process. A descriptive document with similar information should also be made available and accessible by the employees at any point that they want to learn more about the program.

4. TM process communication and cascading should be part of the TM plan and cycle. Employees with unclear or vague information on a specific organization's initiatives or functions will affect their expectations, interest and level of involvement. Thus, we have noticed the talent expectations were one of "Excellence's" challenges.

## **Current practices and contemporary procedures**

### **Talent acquisition and selection**

5. It is noticed that the current best approach in acquiring talent is through a combination of both internal and external talent acquisition. Attracting external candidates to join the company whom possesses knowledge, skills, and capabilities that are lacking or scarce in the company or in the market will help the organization to develop faster and gain rapid competitive edge with new strategic outlooks and ideas. While growing the company's own human assets and talents contributes highly to employees or talent development & retention, it also has the advantage of progressing individuals familiar with the organization's culture, nature and issues which can save the time that an external hire would need to adjust and learn about the company's culture and dynamics.

### **Training, development, and talent retention**

6. Organizations should have a mixture of traditional, distinctive and customized development programs and curricula that fits coherently with the TM Program and individuals' objectives, needs, level, and experience.
7. Organizations should offer development opportunities and tools to their talents that provides them with diversified and cross-cultural exposures and experiences especially if the organization's structure allows it. Knowledge gained from such encounters with dissimilar

thoughts and practices contributes highly to the individual's development and cognitive thinking.

8. Organizations should follow a proactive approach in retention and in retaining talent. To maintain the loyalty and engagement levels of the employee that are usually broken with the thought of leaving the organization.
9. It is favorable that international organizations, like "Excellence", continues with and reinforce the use of mobility & rotation as development and retention tools.
10. Organizations should enforce innovative talent retention practices that fits the organization setup and culture; examples from "Excellence" are engaging the staff, mobility and rotation.
11. Monetary benefits and earnings are crucial causes of employee's attrition and retention. With talented employees being a very demanded and valuable commodity; a tool such as "performance based remuneration system" can assist in protecting the organization's talent to an extent, by competing with attractive rewards and benefits as good as those offered by major competitors.
12. Embracing competency based human resources practices is proven to be better indicator and model than some of the more traditional HRM approaches to hiring and developing talents.
13. Competency based HRM or competency based methodologies includes behavioral based interviews and assessments.
14. The use of selection tools that are oriented towards behavioral competencies helps the organization in determining the best fit for talented employees, according to their development areas and motives. Depending on the behavior of the employee in similar incidents, that are revealed through behavioral competency interviews shorten the period that the organization needs to learn about how the employee would act after recruitment or placement.
15. Performance linked TM practices improves the results of the program. Tools such as "customized performance based "individual development plans (IDPs)", stretch assignments, and higher job placements" focuses on the talented employee's performance and improves it. It

also is an effective retention measure according to the growth and challenging opportunities that it generates.

16. Country level initiatives such as improving the education system will have a significant impact on determining talent and national talent growth in the country. These are one among several other important political measures and steps that the country needs to take.
17. Futuristic techniques of using talent analytics makes “real time HR” possible, by distributing the needed data on TM and making it available to the key decision makers and related stakeholders. Positioning TM strategically and empowering TM development.
18. Strong succession plans should be created and maintained that are linked to development and mapped to the current talent pool members, i.e., current and available successors are desired in each TM program.
19. Robust succession plans can run through “leadership development programs” that creates career progression and development plans for each TM pool member to enable him/her as a successor to take on higher roles that have been identified.

### **Emiratization and national talent**

20. There is a need to create a linkage between TM practices, and country efforts and regulations regarding TM. This will help align the efforts taken by the country and the organizations, to add value to each other and facilitate them moving in the same strategic direction.
21. While the creation and availability of the Emiratization policy is highly appreciated; there is a need for more customized, clearly defined talent practices to nurture and groom national talents at country, sector and organizational levels.
22. Assigning clear objectives and not only quotas per sector, will support in driving the policy and measuring its progress, in order to assess and evaluate success more accurately.
23. The design of goals and initiatives across multiple levels is needed to make talented nationals at different levels and expertise available in the UAE labour force.

24. Valid data and information about the Emiratization policy needs to be developed by the governmental authorities to help improve the current Emiratization applications and national talent progression. Similar data needs to be made available on unemployment rates and as well as general status reports on labour markets. Without this information, the effectiveness of the policy cannot be measured and any efforts in this matter while the unemployment rates remain high run higher risk of insufficient achievement.
25. Shifting the focus to quality rather than just quantity in applying the Emiratization policy is an important element to shape its future. Today, the numbers & quotas drive the policy affecting the type of opportunities created for UAE nationals and thus the overall creation of talented workforce. Fusing purely on numbers, in the long run will not help serve the purpose of the Emiratization policy or the UAE government's goals for building it.
26. Regular reviews and evaluation of the effectiveness and implementation of the policy are needed. The fact that the policy exists is not enough and steering it exclusively by numbers doesn't help, it needs to be effective as well. It should be evaluated regularly against the objectives and targets for its existence.
27. Periodically scheduled assessments of regular yearly reviews and regular surveys should be conducted. These will assist gathering sufficient data on national unemployment status and rate, Emiratization policy and national talent growth. And will help to overcome the gaps in the Emiratization policy.
28. The more data is gathered and made available on Emiratization and national talent, the more it can contribute to the success of the initiatives taken in this field. As lack of information on the subjects currently have created undesired ambiguity.
29. There also should be close control and monitoring of the policy implementation: to ensure organizations are aligned and on track in implementing the policy, and to compare frequently the aims to the achievements.
30. Communications and public relations campaigns on the importance of the policy by the country should be considered, to limit and possibly eliminate the negative perception and impact of the policy on expatriate workers, whom form a vital part of UAE workforce and are important also in developing the national talents.

31. It has been learnt that one of the key factors of nationals and national talent shortage in the private sector is due to the hiring and development processes that involves hiring managers whom perceive them negatively. Thus changing the perception of the national work force is a crucial component in fostering national talents and enforcing Emiratization.
32. Sharing success stories of high achieving UAE nationals, promoting good examples from within and outside the company can assist with their promotion and career advancement, challenging how they are currently viewed by their foreign counterparts.
33. The governmental authorities as well as organizations should join their efforts in promoting cross cultural conversations, cultural dialogues, and intervention programs as needed to change the current perception of the Emiratization policy and UAE national employees.
34. The shortage of national talent and specifically senior UAE national talents in the private sector needs to be resolved. Items that should be considered while developing the solutions are matching the benefits offered in the public sector, resolving the public holiday's differences, leaves periods, and monetary benefits. As these were the main matters driving nationals away from the private sector.
35. Growing the talent of new UAE national graduates and investing highly in the younger workforce can bridge the shortages and gap of national talents in the UAE, and within the private sector specifically.

Talent audits and reviews should be conducted frequently; whether the employees are from the talent pool or the TM program it forms an important part of any TM program. To regularly evaluate the TM program and assess improvements needed, and to appraise talent pool members based on their achievements and progress compared to their individual development goals and work task objectives.

The Talent Management concept and models are relatively new and there is an urgent need for developing more knowledge in the human resources field and specifically in the Middle East region. This study has shed light on current practices that are consistent with global standards and have been implemented successfully in UAE. It has also highlighted many areas for improvement within the current setup of TM in the UAE and the banking sector and identified the extensive scope for further research.

## References

- Al-Humayd, A.-w. K. (2010). Future Requirments of the Guklf Labor Market: The Saudi Model. In *Human Resources and Development in the Arabian Gulf*. Abu Dhabi, UAE: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research.
- Al-Kandari, M. H. (2010). Society, Culture and Development in the Gulf Region. In *Human Resources and Development in the Arabian Gulf*. Abd Dhabi: he Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research.
- Al-Khazaraji, K. (2010). Challenges Facing workforce Nationalization in the Gulf. In *Human Resources and Development in the Arabian Gulf*. Abu Dhabi: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research.
- Bei, H., & Li, M. (2006). Research on the Motivation Factors for the Development of Talent in the Industry Cluster.
- Carr, S. C., Inkson, K., & Thorn, K. (2005). From global careers to talent flow: Reinterpreting 'brain drain'. *Journal of World Business*, 40, 386–398.
- Chabault, D., Hulin, A., & Soparnot, R. (2012). Talent management in clusters. *Organizational Dynamics*, 41, 327—335.
- Collings, D. G., & Mellahi, K. (2009). Strategic talent management: A review and research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review*, 304-313 .
- Corsello, J. (2012). Maximizing talent management through the cloud. *Human Resource Management International Digest*, 20, 27-30.
- Gordon, E. E. (2013, May). [www.talentmgt.com](http://www.talentmgt.com). Retrieved 2014, from [www.talentmgt.com](http://www.talentmgt.com).
- Herman, A., Gottfredson, R. K., & Joo, H. (2012). Using performance management to win the talent war. *Business Horizons*, 55, 609-616.

- Hor, F., Huang, L.-C., Shih, H.-S., Lee, Y.-H., & Lee, E. S. (2010). Establishing talent management for company's succession planning through analytic network process: Application to an MNC semiconductor company in Taiwan. *Computers & Mathematics with Applications*, 60, 528-540.
- Ingham, J. (2006). Closing the talent management gap. *Strategic HR Review*, 5, 20-23.
- Joyce, W. F., & Slocum, J. W. (2012). Top management talent, strategic capabilities, and firm performance. *Organizational Dynamics*, 41, 183-193.
- Lewis, R. E., & Heckman, J. R. (2006). Talent management: A critical review. *Human Resource Management Review*, 16, 139–154.
- Matthew, P., & Ramesh, S. (2012). *Winning the talent war in local markets by staying global*. London: McKinsey & Company.
- Meyers, M. C., van Woerkom, M., & Dries, N. (2013). Talent — Innate or acquired? Theoretical considerations and their implications for talent management. *Human Resource Management Review*, 23, 305–321.
- Newhall, S. (2012). A global approach to talent management. *Human Resource Management International Digest*, 20, 31-34.
- Ng, P. T. (2011). Singapore's response to the global war for talent: Politics and education. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 31, 262-268.
- Nilsson, S., & Ellström, P.-E. (2012). Employability and talent management: challenges for HRD practices. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 36, 26-45.
- Powell, M., & Lubitsh, G. (2007). Courage in the face of extraordinary talent. *Strategic HR Review*, 6, 24-27.
- Romans, J., & Lardner, L. (2005). Integrated talent management at BD Japan. *Strategic HR Review*, 4, 16-19.

- Stadler, K. (2011). Talent reviews: the key to effective succession management. *Business Strategy Series*, 12(5), 264-271.
- Statistics Centre - Abu Dhabi. (2014). *scad.ae*. Retrieved 10 22, 2014, from Statistics Centre - Abu Dhabi: [www.scad.ae/SCADDocuments/SYB 2013 English -Labour Force-Unemployment.pdf](http://www.scad.ae/SCADDocuments/SYB%202013%20English%20-Labour%20Force-Unemployment.pdf)
- Stewart, J., & Rigg, C. (2011). *Learning and Talent Development*. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.
- Talent management: an overview - Factsheets - CIPD*. (2011, June). Retrieved Dec 6, 2011, from CIPD: <http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/factsheets/talent-management-overview.aspx>
- Tansley, C. (2011). What do we mean by the term “talent” in talent management? *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 266-274.
- Uren, L., & Samuel, J. (2007). From talent compliance to talent commitment. *Strategic HR Review*, 6, 32-35.
- Williamson, D. (2011). Talent management in the new business world. *Human Resource Management International Digest*, 19, 33-36.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). Case Study Research: Design and Methods. *Applied Social Research Methods Series*, 5(4), 107.