

# **Talent Management in Higher Education**

# TALENT MANAGEMENT

**Series editors:** Vlad Vaiman and David Collings

This series focusses on talent management, one of the fastest growing areas of research in the areas of business and management. As a topic, it bridges a number of core management areas, including human resource management, organizational psychology, strategy and international business.

The series features monographs and edited collections exploring both research and practical perspectives on contemporary talent management. The main aim of the series is to provide a key outlet for scholars wishing to publish novel perspectives on talent and talent management from across disciplinary divides. It also provides an opportunity for those seeking to explore new and innovative issues and topics in this area in greater depth. The series will bring together emerging theoretical approaches with real-world practitioner perspectives from across a range of subjects in this field, including (but not limited to):

- Employer branding
- Talent analytics
- Global talent management
- Talent turnover
- Talent retention
- Talent development
- Talent and teams
- Distribution of performance
- Transferability of performance
- Contextual performance
- Performance and potential
- Talent management in SMEs
- Talent management in the public sector
- Talent management in developing economies

## **Previous volumes in this series:**

*Talent Management in Small Advanced Economies*

By Snežina Michailova and Dana L. Ott

*Managing Talent: A Critical Appreciation*

Edited by Stephen Swailes

*Global Talent Retention: Understanding Employee Turnover Around the World*

Edited by David Allen and James Vardaman

*Talent Management: A Decade of Developments*

Edited by David G. Collings, Vlad Vaiman and Hugh Scullion

*Talent Management Innovations in the International Hospitality Industry*

Edited by Stefan Jooss, Ralf Burbach and Huub Ruël

*Global Talent Management During Times of Uncertainty*

Edited by Francine Schlosser and Deborah M. Mcphee

# Talent Management in Higher Education

EDITED BY

**MARIAN THUNNISSEN**

*Utrecht University and Fontys University of Applied Sciences,  
The Netherlands*

AND

**PAUL BOSELIE**

*Utrecht University, The Netherlands*



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited  
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4DL.

First edition 2024

Editorial matter and selection © 2024 Marian Thunnissen and Paul Boselie.  
Individual chapters © 2024 The authors.



Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. These works are published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of these works (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.

### **Reprints and permissions service**

Contact: [www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com)

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

### **British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-80262-688-9 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-80262-685-8 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-80262-687-2 (Epub)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

# Contents

List of Figures and Tables	vii
About the Contributors	ix
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b> <i>Marian Thunnissen and Paul Boselie</i>	1
<b>Chapter 2 The Changing Context of Higher Education and Its Impact on Academic Jobs and Academic Work</b> <i>Joop Schippers</i>	19
<b>Chapter 3 Wind of Change: The Recognition and Rewards Movement</b> <i>Judith de Haan, Paul Boselie, Marieke Adriaanse, Sicco de Knecht and Frank Miedema</i>	37
<b>Chapter 4 Recognition and Rewards in Academia – Recent Trends in Assessment</b> <i>Bianca Kramer and Jeroen Bosman</i>	55
<b>Chapter 5 Talent Management of Doctoral Students: Focus on Well-being, or How to Deal with the Mental Health Crisis in Graduate Education</b> <i>Loes van Beuningen</i>	77
<b>Chapter 6 Reimagining Doctorate Holders' Motivations to Make Career Transitions: Exploring Post-PhD Career Prospects Within and Outside Academia</b> <i>Christine Teelken, Inge van der Weijden and Stefan Heusinkveld</i>	99
<b>Chapter 7 Talent Development in the Context of Higher Education</b> <i>Sanne Nijjs, Christina Meyers and Marianne van Woerkom</i>	119

<b>Chapter 8 The Worth of a Talent? Pay Inequality in Universities</b> <i>Marloes van Engen and Brigitte Kroon</i>	137
<b>Chapter 9 Collaborative Innovation in Academia: In Search for Coalitions and Strategic Alliances for HRM Transformation</b> <i>Paul Boselie</i>	161
<b>Chapter 10 Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations</b> <i>Marian Thunnissen and Paul Boselie</i>	179
Index	197

# List of Figures and Tables

## Figures

Fig. 1.1.	Talent Management Value Chain for the Public Sector.	10
Fig. 2.1.	Population with Tertiary Education, 25- to 34-Year-Olds (%), Selected Countries, 1987–2020.	25
Fig. 2.2.	Population with Tertiary Education, 25- to 34-Year-Olds (Spheres)/55- to 64-Year-Olds (Diamonds) (%), Selected Countries, 2020.	26
Fig. 3.1.	Recognition and Rewards as an Integral Approach to Implement Open Science to Improve Working Together Towards a Better World.	42
Fig. 3.2.	Link Between AMO Model and Harvard Model.	47
Fig. 4.1.	TRIPLE Model for Recognition and Rewards, Utrecht University.	59
Fig. 4.2.	Various Aspects of the Research Workflow That Could Be Considered in Assessment to Focus on Process Rather Than Outcomes.	61
Fig. 4.3.	Why JIF Should Not Be Used to Assess Individual Researchers (Plomp et al., 2021).	64
Fig. 4.4.	Why <i>h</i> -Index Should Not Be Used to Assess Individual Researchers (Plomp et al., 2021).	64
Fig. 4.5.	I Am Not My <i>h</i> -Index (or My JIFs) (Curry, 2018).	65
Fig. 6.1.	The Three Career Types and Their Interrelations (Gläser & Laudel, 2015, p. 18).	104
Fig. 8.1.	Number of Women and Men Across Different Positions (and Job Levels).	144
Fig. 8.2.	Salary Differences Women–Man Per Job Level.	145
Fig. 8.3.	Hierarchy of Responsibilities to Prevent Salary Inequality in Universities.	155

## Tables

Table 5.1.	Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants.	85
Table 6.1.	Overview of the General Motivations.	107
Table 8.1.	Policy Interventions to Prevent Salary Inequality.	153

*This page intentionally left blank*

## About the Contributors

**Marieke Adriaanse** is Professor of Behavioral Interventions in Population Health at Leiden University and the Leiden University Medical Center. Before working in Leiden, she worked as Associate Professor at Utrecht University, where she was Co-chair of the Recognition and Rewards pillar of the Open Science programme. In this role, she contributed to the development of the new Utrecht University vision on and system of Recognition and Rewards. Currently, she is Recognition and Rewards Ambassador of the Leiden University Academia in Motion programme.

**Loes van Beuningen**, PhD, is Coordinating Researcher at the Research Group Dynamic Talent Interventions of Fontys University of Applied Sciences of Human Resource Management and Applied Psychology (Eindhoven, the Netherlands). She is also teaching at the Open University (Heerlen, the Netherlands) and working as a Guest Researcher at Radboud University (Nijmegen, the Netherlands) with a focus on the well-being and academic achievement of doctoral students with characteristics of giftedness.

**Paul Boselie** is Professor in Public Administration and Organization Science at Utrecht University. He is specialized in Human Resource Management (HRM) in public sector organizations. He was Head of Department of the Utrecht University School of Governance. From 1 September 2023, he is the Chief Open Science at Utrecht University. From 2019 to 2023, he was Chair of the Open Science subtheme Recognition and Rewards aimed at transforming Academia. He has published his work in journals such as *Health Care Management Review*, *Journal of Management*, *Human Resource Management*, *Human Resource Management Journal*, *Human Resource Management Review*, *Human Relations*, *The International Journal of HRM*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Personnel Review* and *Public Management Review*. His interview in *Nature* (25 June 2021) caused a worldwide debate on abandoning the journal impact factor for HRM purposes in Academia.

**Jeroen Bosman** (ORCID: 0000-0001-5796-2727) is a Scholarly Communications Specialist and Geoscience Librarian at Utrecht University Library. He is recognition and rewards fellow in the Open Science programme of Utrecht University. He is member of the national project team for revising the framework for open access monitoring in the Netherlands. He is an expert in the field of open

science and open access policy, practices and tools, as well as scholarly search engines. His main interests are Open Access and Open Science in all academic fields, scientometrics and research evaluation. He has 25+ years teaching experience in academic information skills and has led dozens of Open Science workshops, including internationally. He has co-authored numerous publications in the field of scholarly communication, including reports commissioned by VSNU (currently UNL) on publication cultures, by eOAlition S on Plan S compliant publication venues, and by Science Europe on diamond open access journals.

**Marloes van Engen** is Associate Professor of Strategic Human Resource Management at the Institute of Management Research, Radboud University, Nijmegen. Her passion in teaching and research lies in understanding and managing diversity, equality and inclusion in organisations and in sustainability in work and care. She is a Programme Director for the Master Business Administration at Radboud University. She has published in, among others, the *Academy of Management Annals*, *Leadership Quarterly*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion* and *The International Journal of HRM*. She was Chief Diversity Officer for Tilburg University (2013–2018) advising the Executive Board and managing the Gender Policy Department.

**Judith de Haan** works as the Open Science Programme Manager at Utrecht University (UU). This programme started in 2019 and consists of topics such as ‘Open Education’, ‘Recognition & Rewards’, ‘Public Engagement’, ‘Open Access’ and ‘FAIR data & Software’. Leading a dedicated team, she steers the implementation of open science principles at UU, effectively bridging the gap between policy and practical execution. Her academic roots lie in the field of biomedical sciences, where she completed her PhD within the Experimental Cardiology Department at the University Medical Center in Utrecht (UMCU). Throughout her PhD, her passion for open science developed. Notably, she became part of the preclinicaltrials.eu team, a group dedicated to the preregistration of animal research. In 2018, she continued her professional journey at UMCU, where she played a pivotal role in enhancing research departments through the implementation of a customer excellence programme. These experiences have equipped her with insights and skills that she now applies in her current role.

**Stefan Heusinkveld** is an Associate Professor at Radboud University Nijmegen. His current research concentrates on the translation of management ideas, with a special interest in studying the role of different professions and occupations. His work on these topics appeared in journals such as *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, *Human Relations*, *Human Resource Management Review*, *Information & Management*, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Management Learning* and *Organization Studies*. His books have been published by Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press and Routledge. He serves on the editorial boards of *Organization*, and *Organization Studies*, is Consulting Editor of *Journal of Professions and Organization* and is Co-editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Management Ideas*.

**Sicco de Knecht** is Head of Research Policy at Leiden University. In his previous role as Open Science Programme Coordinator at Utrecht University, he contributed to the development of a new vision and system of Recognition and Rewards. As Senior Policy Advisor at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, he worked on open science, public engagement and science for policy.

**Bianca Kramer** (ORCID: 0000-0002-5965-6560) has been Scholarly Communication/Open Science Librarian at Utrecht University Library for 15 years and recently moved to an independent consulting/research analyst role, with a focus on open science, open metadata and open infrastructure. She has co-authored commissioned reports on a quantitative analysis of publication types in Dutch research outputs, a gap analysis of Plan S-compliant publication venues and the diamond open access (OA) landscape and conducted a large-scale investigation comparing coverage of metadata in open metadata sources including Crossref and OpenAlex, the latter in collaboration with the Curtin Open Knowledge Initiative (COKI). She has also been involved in a recent revision of the UNL (Universities of the Netherlands) Definition Framework Open Access monitoring. She is founding member of the Initiative for Open Abstracts (I4OA) and is currently a member of the Preprint Advisory Group of Crossref, as well as the Europe PMC and Literature Services Scientific Advisory Board of EMBL-EBI.

**Brigitte Kroon** is Associate Professor Human Resource Studies at the School of Social and Behavioral Science, Tilburg University. Her research and teaching focus on HRM and decent work in the context of non-standard work (e.g., small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), seasonal work, migrant workers) and evidence-based HRM. She is the Academic Director of the Bachelor HRS. She has published in peer-referenced books and journals like *International Journal of Human Resource Management* and the *Human Resource Management Journal*. As a member of the Lokaal Overleg (Works Council) of Tilburg University (2011–2020), she participated in the advisory board of the Gender Equality Project.

**Christina Meyers** obtained her PhD from Tilburg University, The Netherlands, in 2015. She used to work as Assistant Professor at the Department of Human Resource Studies at Tilburg University. As an independent researcher she is involved in academic research and publications. Her research interests include applied positive psychology, employee well-being, employee strengths and talents and organizational talent management.

**Frank Miedema** is Emeritus Professor at Utrecht University. He was until September 2023 Vice Rector for Research and Chair of the Utrecht University Open Science Programme. He studied Biochemistry at the University of Groningen, with a minor in the Philosophy of Science. From 1983, he was a Project Leader in the Immunovirology of HIV/AIDS, as part of the Amsterdam Cohort Studies. He was appointed Director of Sanquin Research in Amsterdam in 1998. In 2004, he became head of the Immunology Department at the University Medical Center Utrecht. From January 2009 to March 2019, he was Dean and Vice

Chairman of the Executive Board of the University Medical Center Utrecht. He is one of the initiators in 2013 of Science in Transition ([www.scienceintransition.nl/english](http://www.scienceintransition.nl/english)) who argued that the academic incentive and reward system is in need of fundamental reform. The impact on society must be valued more, and societal stakeholders should be involved more in the production of knowledge. In 2021, he published 'Open Science: The Very Idea' at Open Access at Springer.

**Sanne Nijs** is an Assistant Professor within the Department of Human Resource Studies at Tilburg University, the Netherlands. Her main research interests include talent management, inclusive HRM and non-standard employment. She adopts a critical stance on talent management and is interested in discovering how talent management creates and reproduces social inequalities. Her main goal is to create more inclusive ways of managing talent, paying attention to non-standard, 'non-ideal' workers. In order to do this, she seeks to establish interdisciplinary connections (e.g., strategic HRM, diversity and positive psychology). She has published her work in, among others, *Human Resource Management Journal*, *Human Resource Management Review*, *Journal of World Business* and *Journal of Vocational Behavior and Talent Development in the Context of Higher Education* (Emerald Publishing, 2024).

**Joop Schippers** is Professor of Labour Economics at the Faculty of Law, Economics and Governance of Universiteit Utrecht (UU) and one of the coordinators of the multidisciplinary UU platform Future of Work. His research covers the broad field of work and social inequality, with a focus on gender- and age-related differentials. Over the years, he has participated in several executive and advisory boards, both within and outside UU. He has been awarded several proofs of recognition for his successful efforts to create policy impact with the research of his team.

**Christine Teelken** (ORCID: 0000-0002-7211-5574) works as an Associate Professor at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. She is Programme Director of the Bachelor Public Administration and Organization Sciences. Her research concerns higher education, specially (post)academic careers, diversity and governance. She was Editor-in-Chief of Higher Education Quarterly for three years and is active in the ECER conference as link and co-convenor. She has published widely, for example, in *Organization Studies*, *Journal of Professional Organizations* and *Higher Education* and *Studies in Higher Education*. Recently, she co-published a special issue on post-PhD careers.

**Marian Thunnissen** works as a Professor at Utrecht University School of Governance and at the school of HRM and Applied Psychology of Fontys University of Applied Sciences in Eindhoven (the Netherlands). At Fontys, she is the chair of the Fontys research group on Talent Management, and the chair of the Fontys Knowledge Center on Lifelong Learning. At Utrecht University, she holds a professorship on talent development and lifelong learning in the context of higher education. She has over 25 years of experience in research, teaching and

consulting. Throughout her whole career, her research has been focussed on the topic of professional development, careers and HRM, with a specific interest in the public sector and in higher education. She has published several articles, books and book chapters on talent management and talent development, among others, on talent management in the public sector and in academia.

**Inge van der Weijden** (ORCID: 0000-0001-5255-3430) is a Senior Researcher and PhD Coordinator at the Center for Science and Technology Studies at Leiden University, the Netherlands. She conducts both qualitative and quantitative research on the work experiences and evaluation of early career researchers in order to better understand their career development within and outside academia. Special attention is given to mental health. She also acts as Coordinator of the EARLI Special Interest Group 'Researcher Education and Careers'. She completed her PhD in 2007 at VU Amsterdam, the Netherlands. From 2020 to 2023, she was the President of the Netherlands Centre of Expertise for Doctoral Education.

**Marianne van Woerkom** is Professor of Positive Psychology in the Context of Human Resource Studies within the Department of Human Resource Studies at Tilburg University, the Netherlands. Employee well-being and development are central themes in her research. Inspired by positive psychology, she is interested in how a strength-based approach can allow individuals and organizations to thrive.

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*Marian Thunnissen<sup>a</sup> and Paul Boselie<sup>b</sup>*

<sup>a</sup>*Utrecht University School of Governance/Fontys University of Applied Sciences,  
The Netherlands*

<sup>b</sup>*Utrecht University School of Governance, The Netherlands*

### Abstract

Talent management in higher education institutes is an underexplored topic. Only a small portion of talent management publications is focussed on describing talent management in higher education institutes. In this chapter, we give an overview of the most important topics in the talent management literature in general and link it to what is known about these issues in higher education. It discusses the definition of talent and talent management, the talent management process and the multilevel outcomes of talent management, the fairness and justice issues related to talent management and the importance of embedding the analysis of talent management in its broader organizational and institutional context. In the final part of this introduction chapter, we will explain how the talent management topics are discussed in the subsequent chapters of this book.

*Keywords:* Talent; talent management; academia; university; context; performance; outcomes; talent management practices; Open Science; Recognitions and Reward

---

Talent Management in Higher Education, 1–18



Copyright © 2024 by Marian Thunnissen and Paul Boselie. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. These works are published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of these works (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>  
doi:[10.1108/978-1-80262-685-820241001](https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80262-685-820241001)

## Introduction

The days of the university as an ivory tower are over. More and more institutes in higher education are called up to play their part in society (Frank & Meyer, 2020), because the level and standard of education and research activity are critical determinants of the innovation capacity, the economic prosperity and well-being of a nation or a region (Dutta et al., 2020). In many universities, societal impact and public value creation have become part of the strategic goals, integrated in research and education, and as an outcome of research and education. More recently, Open Science programmes are becoming an essential characteristic of higher education, aimed at, for example, open access of research output and publications, the sharing of high-quality data management and the involvement and engagement of citizens and stakeholders as knowledge producers (European Commission, 2019). The worldwide Covid-19 crisis has forced societies and academia to search for alternative ways of cooperation, co-creation and knowledge sharing in a joint fight against one of the biggest global challenges of our time.

For universities, the people (human resources (HRs)) are the most valuable asset for the success of the organization (Thunnissen, 2016). Although in some disciplines (in particular science) the laboratories and machines are essential, in the end, academic work is very labour intensive, and it's the people who shape universities through research and education. Therefore, academic performance depends on the devotion and specific characteristics of the academic and support staff. For performance in research, teaching and societal impact the availability of talented, creative, innovative and motivated academics, and support staff is essential. The competition for highly educated and academic talents is fierce; also other knowledge-intensive organizations are involved in this 'war for talent' (Holley et al., 2018; Stahl et al., 2012). The attraction and retention of qualified and highly motivated staff are key objectives of universities operating in a global competition for talents. Furthermore, the aforementioned Open Science programmes and its operating principles such as involving society, teamwork, open access of output, sharing data, cooperation and academic leadership are also related to people management issues and therefore the HRs of academia.

Up until now, research on human resource management (HRM) in higher education institutes in general and on talent management in specific is scarce. A review of empirical talent management research by Thunnissen and Gallardo-Gallardo (2017) shows that only a small minority of talent management publications is focussed on public sector organizations, and within that small portion, an even lesser amount of publications is aimed at describing talent management in higher education institutes. This raises the question on what do we know on how universities attract, develop and retain their talents and how do they support their staff to stay employable and qualified to face the global and local challenges?

In the next section, we will give an overview of the most important topics in the talent management literature in general and link it to what is known about these issues in higher education. In the final part of this introduction chapter, we will explain how the talent management topics are discussed in the subsequent chapters of this book.

## The Meaning of Talent and Talent Management

Talent management is often described as the systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement/retention and deployment of talents (e.g. CIPD, 2006; Scullion et al., 2010; Steward & Harte, 2010). Within their talent management definitions, authors adopt different terms for ‘talent’, for example, ‘excellent abilities’, ‘key employees’, ‘stars’ or ‘high potentials’. Since the rise of the topic of talent management nearly 25 years ago, there has been an intensive debate on the definition of talent. Even up until now, new academic publications appear with novel insights regarding the conceptualization of talent (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2019; Skuza et al., 2022; Vardi & Collings, 2023). In 2013, Dries (2013) gave a solid ground to the debate by identifying five tensions in the literature regarding the definition of talent. The first tension refers to object versus the subjective perspective on talent (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013). The subject approach focusses on the identification and development of talented people, while in the object approach, talents are identified as characteristics of people (referring to skills and qualities). The second tension in the literature discusses whether or not to differentiate in the workforce and highlights the difference between an inclusive versus an exclusive approach. The inclusive approach is based on the assumption that all employees are talents or have talents valuable to the organization and the whole workforce should benefit from talent management investments. The exclusive approach is aimed at a select group of employees, namely those individuals who can make a difference to organizational performance (Tansley et al., 2007), and assumes that only this select group should benefit from the talent management inducements. The third tension – input versus output – refers to the distinction between skills, motivation and effort, on the one hand (input), or on the outcomes in terms of excellent performance and success, on the other hand (output). The fourth tension focusses on the question whether talent is innate (‘you either have talent or you don’t’) or, on the contrary, can be acquired and/or further developed. Finally, the fifth tension deals with the discussion of whether a talent is universal and transferable to each context or whether talent is context dependent and that talents in one context are not necessarily relevant in the other context. The academic literature has been criticized for offering a binary conceptualization of talent (Vardi & Collings, 2023). The ‘either/or’ approach as becomes apparent in the aforementioned tensions is not recognized by organizations in practice, as we see that next to the single inclusive and the inclusive approaches also more hybrid or mixed forms exist within organizations. We call for a more nuanced approach to the topic and build insights from paradox theory, encouraging a transition from ‘either/or’ perspectives to ‘both/and’ perspectives. (Dries, 2022; Skuza et al., 2022; Thunnissen et al., 2013; Vardi & Collings, 2023) and urge scholars to do more research on this nuanced or balanced approach to talent management. They have two arguments for that: on the one hand, a balanced approach is more in line with the plural occurrence of talent management in practice; on the other hand, the ‘either/or’ single approach to talent definition makes the company vulnerable as it is not using the full potential of talent management.

In short, for organizations, the main question regarding talent is whether the organization needs to differentiate its workforce (inclusive vs exclusive approach) and on what basis (people or characteristics; potential or performance; etc.). We see two main approaches that integrate some of the tensions mentioned before. Although the inclusive approach could be focussed on people (subjects), we see that the accent is put on the object approach, in particular highlighting the importance of strengths. Strengths are personal characteristics that allow employees to perform well or at their personal best, and in this case, talent management can be interpreted as the identification, appreciation and use of the strengths of employees, assuring that all employees work in a context and organizational climate that enables them to use and develop their talents (Meyers & Van Woerkom, 2014; van Woerkom & Meyers, 2015). The strength-based approach is mainly aimed at empowering and motivating employees and enhancing employee well-being and commitment. The exclusive approach, on the other hand, is more performance oriented, with the assumption that high-performing employees will increase organizational performance (Thunnissen et al., 2013). Regarding the exclusive approach, the conceptualization of talent management by Collings and Mellahi (2009) is dominant. In their 2009 article, Collings and Mellahi argue that the starting point of talent management should not be the identification of talent but the identification of the key positions that are crucial to the survival and performance of the organization. Once these pivotal positions are determined, talent management is aimed at identifying the best-performing employees and creating talent pools to develop and prepare them for fulfilling these positions.

The academic literature available on talent management in higher education shows a preference for the exclusive talent management approach (Björkman et al., 2022; Thunnissen & Buttiens, 2017). The scarcity of positions but also the inherent system of competition within academia emphasizes the importance of performance, and only the most excellent academics will be selected for a tenure and an academic career. We notice a fundamental debate in line with Open Science and Recognition and Rewards transformations on the concept of 'excellence'. In itself, the concept of 'excellence' implicitly assumes some kind of high performance linked to specific goals, for example, research success in terms of publications, citation impact and received research grants. In their publication on talent management in business schools, Björkman et al. (2022) take a subject approach to talent, as they identify two groups of faculty that are most likely to be at the centre of 'business schools' exclusive talent management activities: faculty on a tenure track career path and 'star' tenured faculty with exceptionally strong track records. The tenure track scholars represent the future of the business school, and the tenure track offers these excellent scholars the succession plan to become a full professor once they fulfil the criteria for tenure. The tenure track is regarded as the best way for the university to enhance their performance and professional development and to keep this group engaged and motivated (Björkman et al., 2022). The 'stars' are, according to Björkman et al. (2022), the most experienced, tenured faculty, who outperform their peers in research and, in the context of business schools, also in executive education programmes and in

a high media profile. In contrast to Björkman et al. (2022), Thunnissen and Van Arensbergen (2015) have taken an object approach to talent and tried to identify the main characteristics of a talented academic. They also found the dominance of an exclusive performance-oriented talent management approach. A talented academic excels because of the traditional academic abilities (i.e. scientific understanding and academic expertise) but also offers extra, non-scientific skills: nowadays an academic talent is able to communicate, enthuse and inspire others, is proactive and able to market his or her ideas and research (Thunnissen & Van Arensbergen, 2015). Also, a strong passion for science, a high motivation and the ability to work very hard is of importance and will help you to survive the rat race in academia. High (proven) performance is up until now the most distinctive feature of academic talent and in particular outstanding research performance visible in many top-ranking publications and a high rate in acquiring research funding. The study of Thunnissen and Van Arensbergen (2015) shows that the precise operationalization of talent is highly subjective and contextual: the several stakeholders within academia – HR, management, employees – each have their own interpretation of what makes someone talented, and the operationalization of talent differs between the academic disciplines. However, at critical moments – such as career promotions or granting a research grant – the best track record in research performance is decisive (van Arensbergen et al., 2014; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012).

## **A Multiactor and Multilevel Perspective on Talent Management Practices**

The conceptualization of talent is important because it has implications for the talent management practices induced by the organization (Meyers et al., 2020; Meyers & Van Woerkom, 2014; Skuza et al., 2022). According to Meyers and Van Woerkom, (2014), the fundamental underlying assumptions and beliefs about the nature, value and instrumentality of talent held by an organization's key decision-makers are essential determinants of the specific shape of HR practices. For example, an inclusive and developmental perspective would imply investments in learning and development practices available to all employees, as an exclusive and stable talent philosophy could lead to putting accent on attracting the best top talents available on the labour market (Meyers & Van Woerkom, 2014). The idea of talent philosophies affecting the implementation of talent management also implies that talent management is more than an objective and rational process. The individuals' cognitive representations of the world affect how they perceive and act upon things (Meyers et al., 2020). Several recent talent management publications have focussed on the impact of mental models or talent philosophies of HR professionals on the development and implementation of talent management strategies (Dries, 2022; Meyers et al., 2020; Meyers & Van Woerkom, 2014). The usual suspects in talent management research are top and middle managers and/or HR professionals, as they examine their perspectives regarding the intended talent management strategy and its presumed contribution to organizational performance. Stahl et al. (2012) and Anlesinya et al. (2019) claim that that successful

companies are aware that the talent management process includes multiple owners: not just HR and top management but managers at all levels. Only a handful of publications include line managers as research participants (Bos et al., 2020). More recently, we see a growing number of studies investigating the perceptions and experiences of another important stakeholder: the employee (De Boeck et al., 2018; King, 2016). De Boeck et al. (2018) did a review on research on employee reactions to (exclusive) talent management and found mixed signals in the literature. On the one hand, they found that, in the exclusive approach, employees labelled as talents were more committed, engaged and willing to perform, but, on the other hand, these studies could not give a clear proof of these outcomes being related by talent management practices as control groups with ‘non-talents’ were absent in these investigations. Moreover, they also found negative effects of being labelled as talent: it rises expectations and demands put on talents and could lead to turnover (De Boeck et al., 2018).

Wright and Nishii (2007, 2013) have developed a multilevel HRM process model, in which they identified these multiple actors as well as their role in the different stages in the HRM process. The first stage refers to the intended HRM practices: the development of the policies and decision-making regarding HRM often developed by HR and top management. The actual HRM practices, the second stage in the talent management process, concern the implementation of HRM by line managers in different levels in the organization. The activities of the line managers have a signalling effect on the employee perceptions and experiences with talent management: the perceived HRM practices. These perceptions and experiences influence employee behaviour, which in turn affects the outcomes on the team and organizational level. In the ideal world, there is full alignment between the intended, actual and perceived HRM practices resulting in HR contributing to excellent organizational performance, yet in practice, there are often significant differences between the intended, actual and perceived practices due to mediating factors inside and outside the organization and the involvement of stakeholders. This deviance can hinder the effectiveness of the HR strategy. Within the academic field of talent management, the attention was, as we mentioned earlier, put on investigating the development of intended talent management strategies (Thunnissen & Gallardo-Gallardo, 2017). Thunnissen and Gallardo-Gallardo (2017) were the first to adapt a multiactor and multilevel perspective on talent management. Although research on the multilevel talent management process is scarce, during recent years, the implementation of talent management is getting more attention as well as talent management being the collective responsibility of multiple stakeholders (Anlesinya et al., 2019; McDonnell et al., 2023).

Regarding the implementation of talent management in the context of higher education, research shows that the accent is put on the identification and attraction of talent (Thunnissen et al., 2021). Although human development and training are core activities for universities there is little attention for talent development and retention for the academic staff (Björkman et al., 2022). For the early career scholars, investments in training and development are offered, but for the senior staff, there are hardly any specific development practices and they mainly develop themselves ‘on

the job' (Björkman et al., 2022; Thunnissen, 2016). For the senior positions performance, appraisal is a key talent management activity (Thunnissen, 2016). Björkman et al. (2022) point at two crucial decisions in attracting talent: the initial decision to offer an applicant an assistant, professorship position and the tenure decision. These decisions are mainly based on formal performance systems, which most universities have (Björkman et al., 2022). Nonetheless, research by Van den Brink (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014; Van den Brink & Stobbe, 2009) revealed that the recruitment and selection process was, despite the regulations and protocols in the formal performance systems, highly informal and not transparent. Her research in particular pointed at a gender bias in the selection of professors, due to closed procedures (which are not open to competition), scouting via the informal, male academic networks and the limited number of females in the selection committees, and a lack of transparency in selection procedures and practice. Skuza et al. (2022) state that the increasing role of managers in talent selection has the risk of subjective bias. Van den Brink (Van den Brink et al., 2013; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2014) affirms this and calls academic managers (i.e. professors in supervising or management roles) gatekeepers, because they determine who may enter (or not) the academic community and who can pursue an academic career. At each stage in the academic career, this gatekeeping process is present, and in each stage, excellence is re-assessed and rewarded with a temporary position. The early-career academics who will stay in academia first have to accept a number of temporary contracts as post doc researcher or assistant professor (Van Balen et al., 2012), with each time the insecurity whether he or she will be able to continue the research activities. In the last decades, this job insecurity also includes the senior academic positions (Thunnissen, 2016), having a negative impact on their well-being (Thunnissen et al., 2021). Björkman et al. (2022) also state that the exclusive talent management approach might be visible in higher rewards and benefits for the talents than for the non-talents. The authors expect all higher education institutes to experience the pressure to offer the going market rate for outstanding academics, although this might be more difficult for public schools. They also expect more individualized star faculty work arrangements to attract and retain the talented academics.

## **Fairness and Justice Issues Regarding Talent Management Implementation**

With its accent on the exclusive and performance-oriented approach to talent, the most important decision in the academic talent management approach is the decision whether or not the academic staff member obtains tenure, as the career path structure is 'up or out' (Björkman et al., 2022). A substantial part of the literature on talent management in higher education is focussed on the perceptions of academic staff regarding their academic career and the obstacles they are confronted with while developing and deploying their talents and pursuing an academic career (van den Besselaar & Sandström, 2015; Waaijer et al., 2018). On the one hand, we see publications that investigate the stress, frustration and disappointment attached to these obstacles but also the perseverance to continue the academic career despite the obstacles (Mattijssen et al., 2021; Van Balen

et al., 2012; van der Weijden & Teelken, 2023). On the other hand, studies show career changes and turnover of academics because they experience a psychological contract breach and wish to pursue a career outside academia (Teelken & Van der Weijden, 2018; Van der Weijden et al., 2017).

These findings hint at issues regarding the (perceived) fairness in these crucial decisions, and the ethical issues related to excluding certain groups of the workforce. Exclusive talent management denies a large portion of the workforce the opportunity to realize their potential, to become star performers and to flourish as valued employees (Anlesinya & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020). Kwon and Jang's (2022) critical review on talent management literature identifies four themes underpinning the dysfunctional aspects of exclusive talent management and workforce differentiation practices. The first theme is organizational justice, referring to a fair treatment with due consideration for the employee's well-being. A distinction between the fairness of outcome distributions and allocations (i.e. distributive justice), the fairness of the procedures used to determine the outcomes and distributions (i.e. procedural justice) and the importance of the quality of the interpersonal treatment people receive while procedures are implemented (i.e. interactional justice) can be made (Colquitt et al., 2001; Greenberg, 1990). Kwon and Jang (2022) state that talent identification is the most sensitive stage in terms of its effects on employees' perceptions. Employees identified as talents may get extra benefits because of their talent status, resulting in higher commitment and engagement of the talents but also causing perceptions of injustice in talent identification procedures by the non-talents which may make them cynical and less productive (De Boeck et al., 2018; Gelens et al., 2013; Kwon & Jang, 2022). The second and the third themes identified by Kwon and Jang (2022) refer to ethics and internal competition. The competition inherent to exclusive talent management may cause a 'burning out culture' that pushes talents to take high responsibilities and to be available for work constantly. It may also diminish internal collaboration and threaten a learning climate in the organizations because of the overestimation of the talent's abilities and underestimation of the abilities of those employees not labelled as talents (Kwon & Jang, 2022). Recent research shows that a fair, learning and caring-ethical organizational culture contributes to positive employee reactions (i.e. the perception of being able to develop and use their talents) (Helfenrath et al., 2023). Finally, the search for specific talents may lead to homogeneous workforces, which overlooks the increasing diversity on the current national and international labour market. Anlesinya and Amponsah-Tawiah (2020) plea for a responsible talent management construct that addresses the concerns of all stakeholders, including employees and society. This responsible approach includes inclusivity, corporate responsibility, equity and equal employment opportunities for all employees, in order to achieve sustainable outcomes such as decent and quality work, employee well-being and organizational well-being. The question raises whether the current exclusive talent management approach, and its dysfunctional aspects, will stand with the current developments in academia such as the rise of movements such as Open Science and Recognition and Rewards.