

**LINE MANAGERS' INVOLVEMENT IN TALENT MANAGEMENT: THE CASE OF  
A MALAWIAN BANK**

**by**

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## Abstract

Although there is consensus among practitioners and academics about the progress made in talent management (TM) research and the recognition of line managers (LMs) as essential stakeholders in TM due to their influence on organisational performance, our comprehension of how LMs are involved in TM remains limited. Moreover, existing frameworks for analysing LMs' involvement in TM are fragmented and lack a unified approach. As a result, there is a growing call for research studies focusing on this subject, particularly in national and industrial contexts that have received less attention. This thesis aims to fill this gap by examining LMs' involvement in TM within a banking case study organisation (CSO). Its primary objectives are twofold: (1) to expand empirical knowledge on LMs' involvement in TM in understudied national and industrial contexts, and (2) to offer valuable insights to organisational policymakers on how to effectively involve LMs in TM to enhance TM's sustainable competitive advantage. The thesis is driven by three research questions: (1) how talent is understood and managed through the lens of the TM philosophy; (2) how LMs are involved in TM; and (3) which factors prohibit or facilitate LMs' involvement in TM.

The study adopted an interpretivist epistemology and utilised an inductive approach, a qualitative research strategy, and a case study research design. To gain a deeper understanding of the topic, a total of 47 in-depth one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders at various levels. Additionally, secondary data analysis was performed to complement the primary data. The data analysis process employed a reflexive thematic analysis strategy and NVIVO software was utilized to aid in the analysis.

The study reveals that the CSO employs a hybrid TM philosophy, incorporating both an exclusive key position TM philosophy and an inclusive TM philosophy, to manage diverse talents. Overall, LMs were moderately involved in TM. Their involvement was also moderate in both the exclusive key position and inclusive self-initiated talent development TM philosophies, indicating consistency in their level of involvement across both philosophies. The overall moderate level of LMs' involvement in TM primarily stemmed from their high involvement in operational TM tasks, accompanied by moderate decision-making authority, moderate financial power and moderate TM expertise. Additionally, external forces (e.g. low leadership independence, the COVID-19 pandemic) and internal factors, such as the CSO's bureaucracy, resource constraints hindered LMs from fulfilling their designated TM roles, further resulting in a disparity between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM. Finally, a unified framework was generated to analyse prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM within the CSO. The study's contributions lie in expanding the application of two analytical frameworks<sup>1</sup> and institutional isomorphism by combining them in this unified framework to analyse varied dimensions of LMs' involvement in TM. Additionally, the study responds to several scholars' calls for more in-depth studies on LMs' involvement in TM in under-studied national and industrial contexts. Finally, practical insights are provided to CSO policymakers into effectively involving LMs in TM.

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<sup>1</sup> Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) Four-dimensional framework; Teague and Roche (2012) Three-dimensional framework; and Institutional Isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983)

## **List of publications and Awards – (Conference proceedings extracted from the thesis)**

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## List of Abbreviations

CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CAQDAS	Computer Aided Data Analysis Software
CSO	Case Study Organisation
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease Pandemic
FDF	Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) Four-dimensional framework
GIP	Government Internship Programme
HRM	Human Resource Management
HRPP	Human Resources Policies and Procedures
HRP1	Human Resource Department participant number 1
HRP2	Human Resource Department participant number 2
HRP3	Human Resource Department participant number 3
HRP4	Human Resource Department participant number 4
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LM	Line Managers
LDP	Leadership Development Programme
MIM	Malawi Institute of Management
MG	Malawi Government
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education
PMS	Performance Management System
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SM	Senior Management
SRC	Staff Representative Council
TDF	Teague and Roche (2012) Three-dimensional framework
TM	Talent Management
TNA	Training Needs Analysis



# **Chapter 1: Introduction on LMs' involvement in TM in the CSO**

## **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter functions as an introductory section to the thesis. Initially, it provides the study's background, which helps to position it within the talent management (TM) environment. Subsequently, it offers the rationale behind the study. Next, it outlines the research problem and identifies research gaps that serve as guiding factors for the study. Additionally, the chapter establishes the research aim, research objectives and research questions, which help to streamline the study's focus. Moreover, the chapter contextualises the study within the banking sector to highlight its distinctiveness. Finally, it outlines the contributions of the study to knowledge and presents the thesis structure.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

TM is recognised as one of the crucial strategies that enable organisations to gain competitive advantage and achieve their mission through the effective use of talent (Davies and Davies 2010; Silzer and Dowell 2010; Bethke-Langernecker *et al.*, 2011; Randall 2011; Schuler *et al.*, 2011; Dries 2013; Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013a; Almannai *et al.*, 2017; Harsch and Festing, 2020). Consistent with the claim, organisations across all industries are currently grappling with the challenge of talent shortages, which, if left unaddressed, can significantly hinder their operations and make them uncompetitive, ultimately resulting in failure to achieve their mandates (Tarique and Schuler 2010; Chatterjee *et al.* 2014; Jaipong *et al.*, 2022). This is due to the intense competition organisations face, where their survival hinges on skilled employees who possess the necessary attributes to secure sustainable competitive advantage through continuous innovation (Suarez 2009; Serban, and Andanut 2014; Mensah 2015a; Harsch and Festing 2020). Hence, TM proves beneficial in this respect, as it presents solutions to address talent scarcity issues by offering guidance on effectively and efficiently attracting, acquiring, developing, motivating and retaining talented individuals who contribute to the fulfilment of organisations' missions (Schuler *et al.*, 2011; Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013a; Clarke and Scurry 2017; Alruwaili 2018; D'Annunzio-Green 2018). In line with the relevance of the TM statement, there is a body of knowledge that relates TM to employee performance (Shannon *et al.*, 2011; Shrimali and Gidwani 2012; Schiemann, 2014; Mensah, 2015a; McDonnell *et al.*, 2023) and ultimately, relating

TM to organisational performance (Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Bethke-Langenegger *et al.*, 2011; Chadee and Raman, 2012; Ulrich and Allen, 2014; Mensah, 2019).

Surprisingly, TM popular as it is, lacks a consistent definition (Lewis and Heckman 2006; Tansley 2011; Dries 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2015). In the context of this study, we follow the definition of Collings and Mellahi (2009:304), who characterised TM as a “systematic identification of key positions that contribute in different ways to the organisation’s sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high-potential and high-performing incumbents to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents and to ensure their continued commitment to the organisation”. Despite being discredited for failing to take into account labour-related changes in the environment, the definition, nonetheless, holds precedence due to its strategic and comprehensive nature (Cappelli 1999; Cascio and Boudreau 2016). This is primarily because it builds on previous influential TM perspectives, approaches and philosophies developed by prominent scholars (Boudreau and Ramstad 2005; Lewis and Heckman 2006; Collings and Mellahi 2009:305).

A closer look at the relevance of the TM statement and its definition given above shows that the definition primarily revolves around the term “talent.” Similar to TM, the term “talent” lacks a universally accepted definition as indicated by various sources (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013:290; Golubovskaya *et al.*, 2019:4109; Harsch and Festing, 2020:45 Amushila and Bussin 2021:2). In this context, we follow the definition of Tansley *et al.* (2007:8), who defined talent as “individuals who can make a difference in organisational performance either through their immediate contribution or, in the longer term, by demonstrating the highest potential”. Encapsulated within these individuals is a set of relevant attributes that enable them to transform the performance of the organisation and may include, but are not limited to, relevant experience, qualifications, character and drive, innate skills, knowledge, leadership skills, intelligence and judgement (Mensah 2015a).

Importantly, for TM to be effective and have a significant impact on employee performance and ultimately organisational performance, several points need to be considered, one of which is to foster a talent mindset within the organisation through the involvement of line managers (LMs) (Elegbe 2010; Bratton and Watson 2018). In agreement with Fu *et al.* (2020:205), the term “Line Managers (LM)” refers to those “people entrusted with the responsibility for direct management of activities in subordinates’ workplaces and includes supervisors and officers.” The importance of involving LMs in TM arises from their advantageous structural positioning, which greatly bolsters the efficiency of the TM process. Due to their close and regular interactions with employees, LMs gain a profound comprehension of the work and possess insights into the specific skills needed to accomplish tasks successfully. Additionally, LMs establish strong relationships with employees and have the ability to influence their attitudes towards their work. Consequently, this understanding and influence enable LMs to devise pertinent TM interventions that significantly enhance the effectiveness of the overall process. (Crick 2008; Ngugi 2016; Fitzgerald 2016; D'Annunzio-Green 2018:10; Golik *et al.*, 2018; Blanco and Golik 2021). Ultimately, enhancing employee, team and organisation performance (Alfes *et al.*, 2013; Bos-Nehles *et al.*, 2013; López-Cotarelo 2018). However, little is known about how LMs are involved in TM (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen 2016; Anlesinya *et al.*, 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Kravariti *et al.*, 2022). Additionally, there is a lack of a unified framework for analysing the varied dimensions of involvement of LMs in TM in a study, as existing ones are fragmented (e.g. Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Nik Mat 2014; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018; Fu *et al.*, 2020; Tyskbo 2020). The majority of existing research studies are conducted within Western national and industrial contexts. Therefore, there is a need for further research in lesser-explored geographical (such as Malawi) and industrial (such as banking organisations) contexts.

The goal of this thesis is to examine the involvement of LMs in TM in a banking case study organisation (CSO). Firstly, the study examines how talent is understood and managed through the lens of the TM philosophy. This examination provides valuable insights into the TM landscape of the CSO which is crucial as it establishes a solid groundwork for more comprehensive exploration of the involvement of LMs in TM.

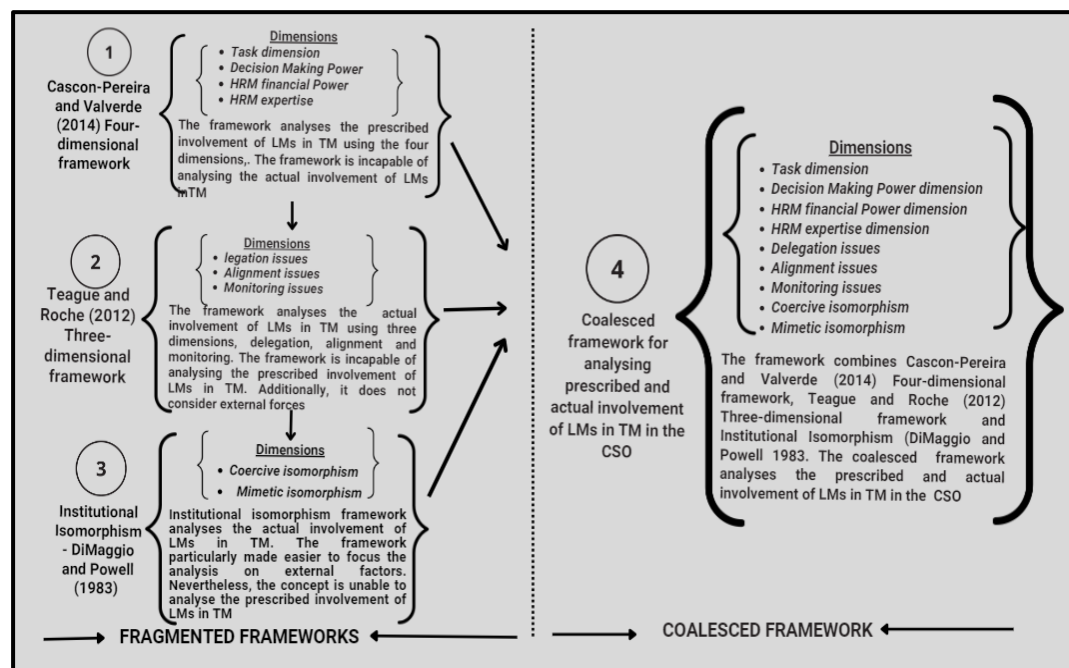
Secondly, the thesis examines the way in which LMs are involved in TM. In this regard, the thesis investigates the extent to which LMs are involved in TM tasks, TM decisions, TM budget, and acquisition of TM expertise. In addition, the thesis examines the reasons for the extent of involvement of LMs in TM. Furthermore, it considers whether the level of involvement of LMs in TM will remain the same or will change in the future. Finally, it examines the way in which LMs align core and TM tasks. By examining the involvement of LMs in TM through the lens of multiple dimensions (e.g. TM tasks, TM decisions, TM budget and expertise) of TM practices, the present study provides a broader, deeper and more balanced view of LMs' involvement in TM in the neglected context of the CSO, which is novel to TM literature, as it responds to calls for an in-depth study on the subject, particularly in less-prominent geographical and industrial contexts (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen 2016; Anlesinya *et al.*, 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Kravariti *et al.*, 2022). Importantly, the approach helps to discern whether LMs' involvement in TM is rhetorical or reality (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). This is based on the understanding that realistic involvement of LMs in TM requires that LMs should be involved in TM tasks, with decision-making powers, backed by financial power and TM expertise; otherwise this leads to liability for LMs and, consequently, negative impact on the effectiveness of the TM process, which in turn impacts employee performance and ultimately organisational performance (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Alfes *et al.*, 2013; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015). Accordingly, the insights from the study would provide guidance to policymakers on the optimal level of involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO.

Thirdly, the thesis investigates contextual factors (e.g., internal and external) and how they influence LMs' involvement in TM. This is entrenched and motivated by the understanding that the actual involvement of LMs in TM may deviate from their prescribed involvement, creating an inconsistency with a resulting negative impact on the effectiveness of the TM process (Tyskbo 2020). Specifically, the study assesses the actual involvement dimension or the lived experience of LMs in TM to provide insight into whether there are contextual factors that might create or mitigate inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. This is critical to realising TM

effectiveness, which in turn would lead to employee performance and ultimately to organisational performance. The insights gained from the study would help policymakers to bridge the inconsistency between intended and actual involvement of LMs in TM created by these contextual factors (Nik Mat 2014; Tyskbo 2020). Importantly, by opening the investigation to external and internal contextual factors, the study provides insights into a wide range of factors influencing LMs' involvement in TM in a CSO which is a public entity, operating in a fast dynamic context which is novel to literature on the involvement of LMs in TM, as it responds to calls for a study on the subject (Kravariti *et al.*, 2022:19).

Finally, to analyse varied dimensions of involvement (e.g., prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO) the thesis inductively generates an empirically unified framework that combines Cascon-Pereira and Valverde's (2014) Four-dimensional framework (FDF); Teague and Roche's (2012) Three-dimensional framework (TDF); and institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). This is novel in the literature on fragmented frameworks for analysing varied dimensions of LMs' involvement in TM in a study. Figure 1 below presents a coalesced framework generated by combining the said fragmented analytical frameworks.

**Figure 1. Coalesced framework for analysing prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO**



The following section provides the rationale for the study.

### **1.3. The rationale for the study.**

TM research falls short in providing TM solutions for organisations, particularly in less-explored national and industrial settings (Cappelli and Keller 2014; Thunnissen 2016:57; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). Several reasons are attributed for this issue. Firstly, most TM studies remain at the conceptual level (Thunnissen et al., 2013:1745). Secondly, the majority of TM research has been conducted in the USA, Europe and Asia, focusing on private and multinational organisations, with very few studies in Africa and the banking sector (Thunnissen et al., 2013a:1745; Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen 2016:40; Anlesinya et al., 2019). Consequently, organisations in unexplored regions have not effectively benefited from TM studies, as the uncovered TM knowledge is not compatible with these unstudied contexts (Tawodzera 2018:4), such as the current CSO, for instance.

Given the aforementioned factors, the study has aimed to develop relevant TM knowledge by understanding the actual meanings, interpretations and perceptions that key TM stakeholders attached to the involvement of LMs in TM within the unexplored CSO context, characterised by (1) low leadership independence; (2) operating in a culturally collectivist country; (3) with high-power distance culture; (4) affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; and (5) by talent scarcity. The study's findings, therefore, offer relevant valuable insights for CSO policymakers to effectively involve LMs in TM.

For instance, the study sheds light on the extent of LMs' involvement in TM and offers guidance on effective approaches to involve them. Moreover, the study identifies obstacles that hinder LMs' involvement in TM, creating a gap between prescribed and actual involvement. It suggests ways to address these obstacles, enabling LMs to fulfil their prescribed roles. Additionally, the study generates a coalesced framework for analysing LMs' prescribed and actual involvement in TM within the CSO. Collectively, these insights are essential for enhancing CSO's sustainable competitive advantage in TM by effectively involving LMs in TM, given their crucial role in attracting, developing and retaining talent. Ultimately, this optimisation allows the CSO to attract, acquire, develop, motivate and retain skilled employees capable of addressing various factors that influence the achievement of their primary mandate: maintaining price and financial stability and enhancing overall growth, which in turn enhance its credibility<sup>2</sup> (Suarez 2009).

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<sup>2</sup> Credibility may be referred to as the capacity of the state bank to keep track of, and carefully analyse, the factors affecting its core function, namely, to maintain price and financial stability (Suarez 2009).

The following section provides a statement of the research problem and research gaps.

#### **1.4 Statement of the Research Problem and Research Gaps**

Mainstream TM literature shows that research is increasingly focused on the impact of talent shortages on HRM practice (Collings and Mellahi 2009; Farndale *et al.*, 2010; Scullion *et al.*, 2010; Vaiman *et al.*, 2012); talent retention (Hughes and Rog 2008; Bidisha and Mukulesh 2013; Kissive *et al.*, 2016); conceptualization of TM (Collings and Mellahi 2009:304; Scullion and Collings 2011:7); graduate TM (McCracken *et al.*, 2016); TM motives and practices in emerging markets (Tatoglu *et al.*, 2015); correlation between TM and performance (Huselid *et al.*, 2005; Boudreau and Ramstad 2007; Bethke-Langernecker *et al.*, 2011; Kahinde 2012; Sheehan, 2012; Collings 2015; Ransbotham *et al.*, 2015; McDonnell *et al.*, 2023) and more recently, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on TM (Dang *et al.*, 2023; Bartik *et al.*, 2020; Haak-Saheem 2020:300; Aguinis and Burgi-Tian 2021:234). While acknowledging the progress made in TM research, several authors have called for more in-depth empirical studies to contextualise the TM research agenda in line with LMs' involvement in TM in under-studied national and industry contexts (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen 2016; Anlesinya *et al.*, 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Tyskbo 2020:836; Kravariti *et al.*, 2022).

Currently, there are a few studies conducted in this area; for example, LMs' involvement in various TM elements via HRM (e.g. Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Gollan *et al.*, 2015; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018; Hutchison and Purcell 2010); LMs' involvement in single TM practices, such as talent acquisition and identification (e.g. Kotlyar 2018; Blanco and Golik 2021; Wiblen and Marler 2021); LMs and talent performance (e.g. Kravariti *et al.*, 2022; Semaihi *et al.*, 2023); TM in the banking sector (e.g. Gitonga *et al.*, 2016; Akinrem and Adedeji 2019; Racolța-Paina and Bucur 2019); and TM in the Malawian context (e.g. Jamu 2017; Dzimbiri and Molefakgotla 2021).

These studies, however, do not provide a holistic understanding of the topic, mainly due to the following points. First, most studies were conducted from the perspective of HRM, which is aligned with egalitarian principles rather than the exclusivity principle commonly advocated by TM (*vide* Hutchison and Purcell 2010; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Gollan *et al.*, 2015). Second, relevant TM studies are focused on a single TM practice (e.g. talent identification), which limits our insight into whether the extent of involvement of

LMs is the same across TM practices or varies from one practice to another (e.g. Kotlyar 2018; Blanco and Golik 2021; Wiblen and Marler 2021). Third, the studies do not provide insight into whether the extent of involvement of LMs in inclusive TM philosophy and exclusive TM philosophy is the same, or varies from one TM philosophy to another. Fourth, with the exception of the work of Hirsh (2015), Fitzgerald (2016), Bratton and Watson, (2018) and Voxted (2019), who attempted to account for the extent of LMs' involvement in TM, prominent research lacks any examination of the extent to which LMs are involved in TM. Fifth, relevant research on TM in the banking sector focused on aspects other than LMs (e.g. Racolța-Paina and Bucur, 2019). Finally, the majority of the studies were conducted in Europe, Asia, and limited parts of Africa, all contextually distinct from the CSO, a non-profit, state-owned bank characterised by (1) low leadership independence; (2) operating in a culturally-collectivist country; (3) a high-power distance culture; (4) being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; and (5) scarcity of talent (Sulamoyo 2010; Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen, 2016; Government of Malawi, 2017; Jamu, 2017; Anlesinya *et al.*, 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Dzimbiri and Molefakgotla, 2021; Kravariti *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, following Jamu's (2017) work on TM in Malawian universities and Dzimbiri and Molefakgotla's (2021) on the Malawian health sector, the CSO appears an interesting context to examine the involvement of LMs in TM.

In addition, mainstream literature on LMs' involvement in TM presents it as a multidimensional concept that includes, among other things, the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM (e.g., Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Nehles *et al.*, 2006; Teague and Roche, 2012; Wright and Nishii, 2013; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde, 2014; Makhecha *et al.*, 2018; Tyskbo 2020). Furthermore, the literature asserts that realising employee and organisational performance through involving LMs requires effectively involving them in TM (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde, 2014; Fitzgerald, 2016; Tyskbo, 2020). Decisions about how to effectively involve LMs in TM are based on analysis of the results of their involvement in both the prescribed and actual dimensions of involvement in TM (Teague and Roche 2012; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Makhecha *et al.*, 2018; Nehles *et al.*, 2006). While analysing the prescribed dimension of involvement provides insights into appropriately determining the level of involvement of LMs in TM (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Lopez-Cotarelo, 2018), analysing the actual dimension of involvement, nonetheless, helps identify obstacles that impede performing their prescribed TM roles as intended, and suggest ways to address them (Teague and Roche 2012; Sumelius *et al.*, 2014; Evans 2015; Bayo-Mariones *et*



*al.*, 2020). Collectively, they ensure well-informed decisions to effectively involve LMs in TM, which in turn contributes to employee performance and, ultimately, organisational performance. However, the literature shows that the frameworks for analysing the involvement of LMs in TM are fragmented (e.g. Bos-Nehles 2010; Teague and Roche, 2012; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde, 2014; Azmi and Mushtaq, 2015; Lopez-Cotarelo, 2018; Fu *et al.*, 2020; Tyskbo, 2020). Typically, individual frameworks are capable of analysing one particular dimension of involvement but not others, creating a challenge when attempting to analyse multiple dimensions of involvement within a single study (e.g. DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Teague and Roche 2012; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Consequently, a gap exists between theory and practice within the TM domain. Not surprisingly, scholars have lamented that TM research lags in offering TM solutions to organisations, especially in under-studied national and industrial contexts (Cappelli and Keller 2014; Thunnissen 2016:57; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020). Consistent with this observed gap, Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* (2015) conducted a review of TM studies, revealing dominant TM theories, including institutionalism. To advance TM theory, the authors called for further TM studies grounded in prevailing theories and, where applicable, in conjunction with relevant theories as analytical lenses (*ibid.*). Therefore, there is a pressing need for a unified framework capable of analysing varied dimensions of involvement of LMs in TM in a single study.

Furthermore, TM is a context-dependent discipline, as its implementation is influenced by its natural context to such an extent that a deep understanding of how the implementation process unfolds necessitates the adoption of a single case study to accommodate thorough examination of the phenomenon (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Cooke, 2018:11; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Cooke *et al.*, 2022). Given the research gaps identified in the preceding sections and the contextual nature of the TM discipline, Cooke (2018:11) and Cooke *et al.* (2022) emphasised the need for an increased number of qualitative studies that adopt a human-centred approach, focusing on in-depth single case studies.

Finally, most empirical studies into the involvement of LMs in HRM have focused solely on the perspectives of either human resource department staff (Valverde *et al.* 2006; Davis, 2007; Perry and Kulik, 2008; Teague and Roche, 2012; Azmi and Mushtaq, 2015; Trullen *et al.*, 2016); or LMs (Whittaker and Marchington, 2003; Evans, 2017; Watson *et al.*, 2007); or employees (Crawshaw and Game, 2015). Consequently, the knowledge gained is insufficient to provide a broad, in-depth and balanced understanding of the phenomenon (Greene *et al.*, 1989; Bos-Nehles and Maijerink, 2018; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020). Given the research gaps identified in the preceding sections and the limitations of a single-perspective approach in examining the involvement of LMs in HRM, Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, (2020:463) and Tyskbo (2020:836) called for studies on the involvement of LMs in TM using a multi-stakeholder approach, with LMs dominating the stakeholders.

Having presented the statement of the research problem and research gaps, the next section streamlines the scope of the study by focusing on the research aim and research questions.

## **1.5 Research Objectives and Research Questions**

Given the research gaps identified in the preceding section, the main objective of the study is to examine the way in which TM is implemented through the lens of LMs in the CSO. In particular, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- (a) To examine the way in which talent is understood and managed through the lens of TM philosophy.
- (b) To examine the way in which LMs are involved in TM.
- (c) To identify the contextual factors and the way in which they impede or facilitate LM's involvement in TM.

Accordingly, the research seeks to answer the following research questions:

- a) How is talent understood and managed through the lens of TM philosophy?
- b) How are LMs involved in TM?
- c) Which factors preclude or facilitate LMs' involvement in TM?

However, the question would be what makes the study unique. Therefore, the subsequent section sheds more light on it.

## 1.6 Contextualising the Study in the Banking Sector

The uniqueness of this study lies in the distinctive context in which it is conducted, which sets it apart from the majority of previous studies on TM. While most of the existing TM research focuses on Western and Asian countries, with only a few studies conducted in Africa (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen, 2016; Anlesinya *et al.*, 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Tyskbo, 2020; Kravariti *et al.*, 2022), this study takes place within the Malawian banking sector, specifically at the CSO. There are various factors that contribute to the distinctiveness of the banking industry and, specifically, the CSO.

Firstly, unlike manufacturing and other service sectors, the banking sector is different, in that it faces fierce competition that forces banks to continually engage in information communication technology (ICT)-enabled innovations to deliver differentiated products (e.g. digital banking), which ultimately intensifies the dynamics of the sector (Soto 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2014:133; Cooper *et al.*, 2019; Kirsch and Wailes 2012; Mofokeng 2018:453). In the context of the Malawian banking sector, innovation plays a crucial role, not only in maintaining competitiveness, but also in safeguarding the revenue streams as the sector faces high regulatory cost pressures that require banks to be more accountable and transparent to customers, with heavy penalties for non-compliance, and regulated pricing of interest-free income products undermining their source of income (Kubwalo-Chaika 2016:3).

Secondly, since the sector deals with public money and assets, it requires a high level of integrity, transparency, and continuity in its operations (Mutasa 2019:10). This follows the financial crisis of 2007-2008 which led to heavy regulation of the sector (Kubwalo-Chaika 2016).

Taken together, these factors lead to the following TM implications. First, the sector is experiencing an ever-increasing demand for resilient, trustworthy, agile and adaptable individuals, who can leverage technology to adapt banks to the sector's new dynamics (Cooke *et al.*, 2019; Network Bank Group Leadership 2018:2; Mofokeng 2018:453). However, due to intense competition for skilled labour and lack of talent in the industry, such people are very difficult to attract, develop and retain (Network Bank Group

Leadership 2018; Mutasa 2019:2; Government of Malawi 2017). Second, the integration of technology into the banking sector has amplified the competition for talented individuals, as banks now face rivalry not just within their industry, but also with sectors outside of banking, including the technology sector (Thanh *et al.*, 2020). Finally, changes in employment careers from single to multiple career paths in the industry have become common due to technological changes (Network Bank Group Leadership 2018:4) and the introduction of performance-related pay due to fierce changes in the sector's competitiveness (Cooke *et al.*, 2019; Zhao *et al.*, 2012).

While the aforementioned implications primarily pertain to commercial banks, they also have significant impact on state-owned banks like the CSO. Firstly, state-owned banks fulfil their mandate, among other things, by supervising the banking sector (Reserve Bank of Malawi 2019; Masciandaro and Romelli, 2018), which necessitates specific talents, such as financial-supervisory expertise. However, these talents may not be readily available locally and may not be enticed by the compensation offered (Menzela 2009:7). Moreover, the situation is further aggravated by the fact that the CSO operates in Malawi, one of the poorest nations in the world (Government of Malawi, 2017).

Secondly, state-owned banks face the expectation of upholding their reputation through vigilant monitoring and thorough analysis of the factors that may hinder their primary objective of ensuring the stability of the country's prices and financial system (Suarez 2009; RBM 2019). Similarly, this necessitates the presence of skilled individuals capable of devising meticulously planned strategies in response.

Thirdly, the bureaucratic nature of state-owned banks clashes with the dynamic nature of the banking industry (Menzela 2009:3).

Fourthly, state-owned banks engage with a diverse array of stakeholders who possess varying interests, norms, logic and rules (Delbridge and Keenoy 2010; Kravariti *et al.*, 2022; RBM 2019). Within the CSO's context, political stakeholders, including the executive arm of government, hold the responsibility of appointing and terminating the top leadership, subject to parliamentary confirmation (RBM 2019; Kalilombe 2008; Kamanga and Chikonda 2017). Although the law dictates that the CSO should have leadership autonomy akin to other state-owned banks worldwide, this is not consistently upheld. Within the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) trading bloc, the CSO's leadership independence was ranked as one of the lowest, made evident by frequent premature termination of contracts following a change of government after general

elections (Wessels 2009; Kamanga and Chikonda 2017; Kalilombe 2008). Since the CSO's top leadership represents a crucial stakeholder in TM, this low leadership independence may potentially have implications for talent attraction, recruitment, development, motivation and retention, through the lens of LMs.

Finally, the CSO operates in a culturally collectivist country, with high-power distance culture, a relatively high level of regulation as evidenced by the passage of labour laws, affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and where talent is scarce (Government of Malawi 2017; Dzimbiri and Molefakgotla 2021; Jamu 2017; Sulamoyo 2010). The combination of these factors offers a unique context in which to examine implementation of TM through the lens of LMs. This is due to the predominant focus of TM studies on Western countries and Asia, with limited research in Africa and sectors beyond the banking sector. (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen 2016; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Kravariti *et al.*, 2022; Anlesinya *et al.*, 2019; Tyskbo 2020:836).

The following section presents the contribution of the study to knowledge.

## **1.7 Contribution to Knowledge**

The thesis contributes in many ways to closing the research gaps identified in the preceding sections, as follows:

Firstly, the thesis makes empirical contributions to TM knowledge by responding to calls from several scholars for an in-depth study on LMs' involvement in TM in understudied national and industrial contexts (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen 2016; Anlesinya *et al.*, 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Kravariti *et al.*, 2022); involvement of LMs in several HRM practices (Tyskbo 2020:836); and for qualitative studies that provide an in-depth look at a variety of issues faced by LMs when implementing TM in the public sector in a rapidly evolving context (Kravariti *et al.*, 2022:19). The claim is based on the following facts.

The study extends TM knowledge on LMs' involvement in TM by providing insights into the level of LMs' involvement in TM in the under-studied context (i.e. the CSO). The level of involvement was based on the results of LMs' combined involvement in varied dimensions, namely: TM tasks, TM decisions, TM budget and TM expertise of TM practices. In addition, the study examined the reasons for the level of involvement of LMs in TM; the way in which LMs align core and TM tasks; and whether the level of involvement would remain the same or change in the future. By examining LMs' involvement in TM through multiple lenses (e.g. TM tasks, TM decisions, TM budget and TM expertise; the rationale for the level of involvement; the way in which LMs align core and TM tasks; and whether the level of involvement would remain the same or change in the future) in an under-studied context like the CSO; the present study provides a realistic, comprehensive, deep and balanced insight into the extent of LMs' involvement in TM, which is novel in TM knowledge, as previous studies lack that in-depth and broad examination of the topic, particularly from under-studied contexts such as the CSO.

In addition, on the one hand, the study extends TM knowledge on LMs' involvement in TM by providing insights into the extent of their involvement according to the individual TM philosophy in an under-studied context (i.e. the CSO). The study found that the CSO managed its employees with a hybrid TM philosophy, comprising an exclusive key position TM philosophy and an inclusive self-initiated TM philosophy. Furthermore, the study found that, overall, LMs were moderately involved in both TM philosophies, implying that the extent of their involvement in both TM philosophies was the same. By extending the examination of LMs' involvement in TM in an under-studied context like the CSO, in order to compare the extent of their involvement in an individual TM philosophy within a hybrid TM philosophy, the study offers new insights to TM literature, as not many relevant previous studies have taken this into account. On the other hand, the study extends TM knowledge on LMs' involvement in TM by providing insights into the extent of their involvement according to TM practices in an under-studied context (i.e. the CSO). The study found that there were differences in the level of LMs' involvement in TM practices. LMs were less involved in talent acquisition and identification and performance management practices, while moderately involved in talent development practice and TM budget process. By extending the examination of LMs' involvement in TM in the CSO to compare the extent of their involvement according to TM practice, the study provides new insights into TM knowledge, as not many previous studies have taken this into account, particularly in less-studied contexts, such as the CSO.

Finally, the study extends TM knowledge on LMs' involvement in TM by providing insights into a wide range of contextual factors in the less-explored context of the CSO which create an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. The study found that institutional forces (e.g. coercive isomorphism manifested in politics leading to low leadership independence; and mimetic isomorphism manifested in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic) coupled with internal contextual factors (e.g. delegation problems, alignment problems manifested in CSO's bureaucracy, TM stakeholders' disposition and resource constraints, respectively) hindered LMs' involvement in TM. As a result, both external and internal contextual forces created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO. By opening the study's investigations to institutional external contextual factors (e.g. coercive isomorphism manifested in politics leading to low leadership independence; and mimetic isomorphism manifested in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as above) alongside internal contextual factors (e.g. delegation, alignment and monitoring problems manifested in disposition of TM stakeholders, CSO bureaucracy and resource constraints), the present study offers insights into a broad spectrum of factors affecting LMs' involvement in TM in an under-studied context, which is an addition to TM knowledge. This is because not many previous relevant studies considered politics manifested in low leadership independence and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as factors affecting LMs' involvement in TM, creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM, particularly in understudied contexts such as the CSO.

Secondly, the thesis makes a theoretical contribution to the literature on fragmented frameworks for analysing the dimensions of involvement of LMs in TM (e.g. prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM). The claim rests on the fact that the study has extended the boundaries of using Cascon-Pereira and Valverde's (2014) Four-dimensional framework, Teague and Roche's (2012) Three-dimensional framework, and institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) by bringing them together to create a coalesced framework for analysing the extent to which LMs were involved in TM and the causes of the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement in TM, represented by the analysis of the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO.

Thirdly, the thesis makes a methodological contribution by: (1) responding to the call by Cooke (2018:11) and Cooke *et al.* (2022) for an in-depth human-centred single-case qualitative research study; (2) answering the call by Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* (2020:463) for

multi-stakeholder perspective studies on line managers' (LMs) involvement in TM; and (3) responding to the call of Tyskbo (2020:836) for a study of LMs' involvement in human resource management (HRM) using a multi-stakeholder approach, with LMs as the main actor, dominating the stakeholders. The claim rests on the fact that the study provides a deep, comprehensive and balanced insight into LMs' involvement in TM in a CSO. This is because the study results were based on an embedded single case-study research strategy that relied on a qualitative research type, an inductive approach and data collected by conducting one-on-one semi-structured interviews with forty-seven (47) multi-stakeholders, namely: Senior Management (SM), human resource department staff (HR staff), officers, supervisors, line managers (LMs) and Staff Representative Council (SRC), with LMs numerically dominant.

Additionally, the thesis contributes methodologically by offering valuable insights into lived experience through qualitative data collection during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The data-gathering process involved conducting one-on-one semi-structured interviews with forty-seven (47) key stakeholders in Malawi, Africa. Apart from adhering to well-established academic data collection protocols, the study followed specific COVID-19 pandemic guidelines. Consequently, this necessitated identification of strategies to address the challenges posed by the impact of the pandemic during data collection. The study's data collection process thus offers a unique and distinct lived experience, which brings a new approach to research design and methodology. This is due to the limited use of in-person interviews in under-explored contexts like the CSO during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in previous studies.

Finally, the study offers valuable managerial insights to CSO policymakers, offering guidance on how to effectively involve LMs in TM. Among other things, the study specifically recommends involving LMs in the shortlisting stage of the talent acquisition process. The research revealed that excluding LMs from this stage had a detrimental impact on the overall effectiveness of the process. By implementing these recommendations, the CSO can strengthen its sustainable competitive advantage in TM, leading to improved employee performance and, ultimately, enhancing organisational performance.



## **1.8 The structure of the thesis**

The thesis has eight chapters and is structured as follows:

### **Chapter One: Introduction on LMs' involvement in TM in the CSO study**

This chapter offers a brief summary of the thesis. It starts by presenting the study's background and follows with the rationale, problem statement and identification of research gaps. The chapter then introduces the research objectives and questions related to the problem statement. Additionally, it emphasizes the study's uniqueness and contributions to existing knowledge, concluding with an outline of the thesis structure.

### **Chapter Two: Review of LMs' involvement in TM.**

The chapter presents the current state of knowledge of the involvement of LMs in TM: it is a review of the existing literature on LMs' involvement in TM. The review is divided into four sections. The first reviews literature relating to implementation of TM, covering understanding talent, TM, TM philosophy/perspectives, TM debates, TM practices and TM contexts. The second section reviews the literature on the way in which LMs are involved in TM, by focusing on TM practices and the reasons for their involvement. The third section reviews factors that prevent or facilitate LMs' involvement in TM. The final section analyses the first three sections and identifies the research gap for the thesis.

### **Chapter Three: Theoretical Frameworks for Analysing the Involvement of LMs in TM.**

This chapter presents the results of a critical review of varied frameworks for analysing the involvement of LMs in TM. In particular, the review focuses on relevant frameworks for analysing the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. While the strengths of the frameworks are acknowledged, efforts were made to uncover their weaknesses (where appropriate). Overall, the frameworks are fragmented and do not provide a unified approach.

## **Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology**

This chapter bridges the current state and a new state of knowledge relating to the involvement of LMs in TM. It outlines the systematic and methodological approach employed to answer the research questions. The chapter begins with a brief presentation of the context of the study, followed by outlining research objectives and research questions, philosophical stance, the research type and the research strategy. Subsequently, it delves into data collection methods, followed by data analysis, interpretation of the data, reflexivity, ethical issues and quality evaluation.

## **Chapter Five: Management of Talents using Hybrid TM philosophy.**

This chapter is the first of the three empirical chapters. The chapter presents and discusses research findings relating to the first research question: how is talent understood and managed through the lenses of the TM philosophy? In particular, the chapter unwraps the theme titled managing talents using hybrid TM philosophy generated in line with the research question. Accordingly, the chapter unearths varied definitions of talent and the forces that shape our understanding of it. In addition, the chapter presents the hybrid TM philosophy adopted to manage talent in the CSO.

## **Chapter Six: LMs initiate, propose, implement TM decisions and acquire TM expertise.**

Building on Chapter 5, this chapter is the second of the three empirical chapters. It presents and discusses research findings related to the second research question: how are LMs involved in TM? In particular, the chapter unwraps the theme titled, LMs initiate, propose and implement TM decisions and acquire TM expertise generated in line with the research question.

## **Chapter Seven: Inconsistency between Prescribed and Actual Involvement of LMs in TM due to Contextual Factors.**

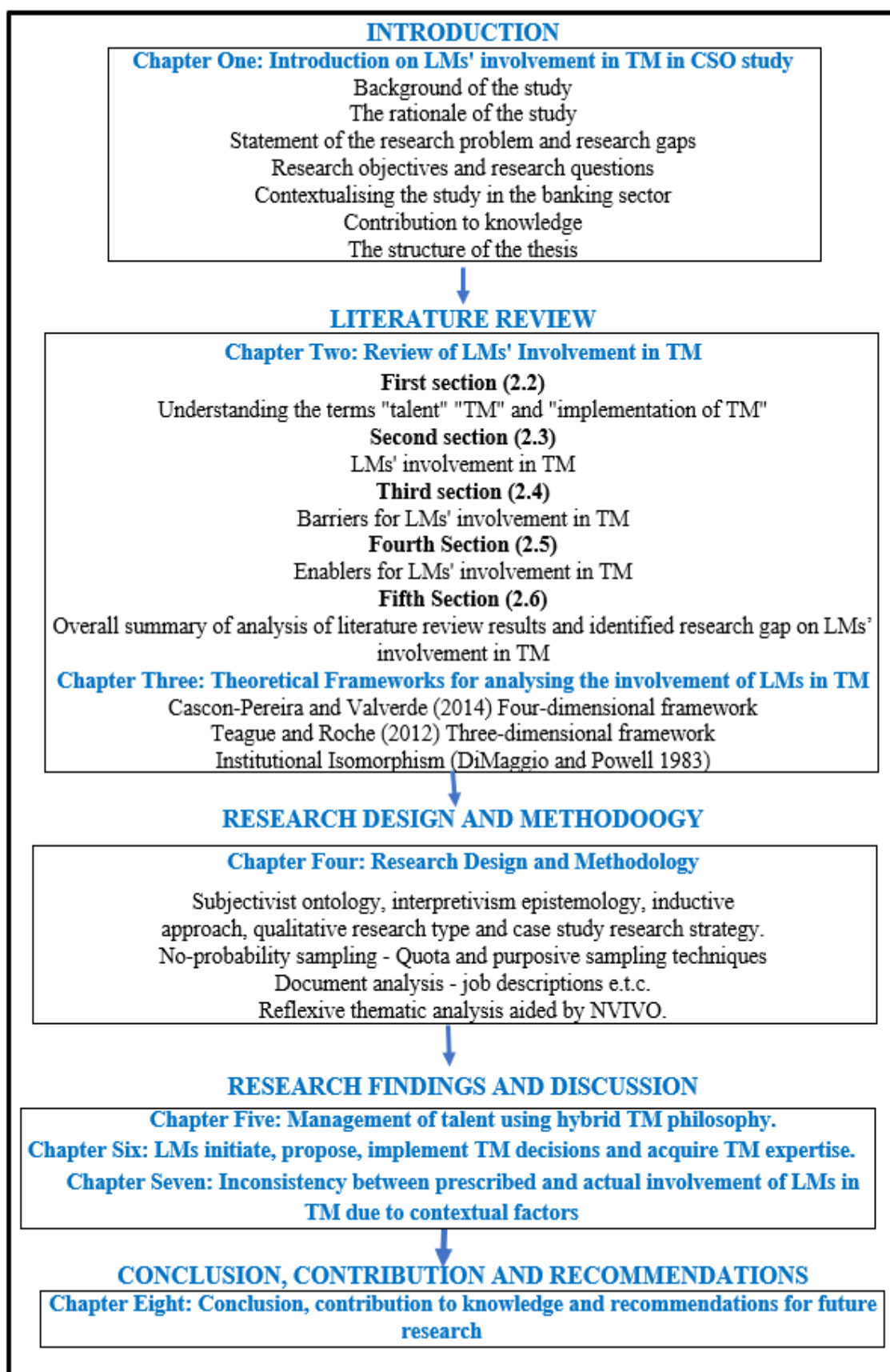
Building on Chapters 5 and 6, this is the last of the three empirical chapters. It presents and discusses research findings for the third research question, i.e. which factors preclude or facilitate LMs' involvement in TM? In particular, the chapter unwraps the theme titled, inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM due to contextual factors. In particular, it presents and discusses the finding that the interplay of external factors (e.g. politics manifested in low leadership independence, COVID-19 pandemic, legal instruments) and internal factors (e.g. disposition of TM stakeholders, CSO bureaucracy and resource constraints) hindered LMs' involvement in TM, creating an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement. Finally, the chapter presents a generated integrated framework for analysing the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO.

## **Chapter Eight: Conclusions, Implications, Contributions, Recommendations for Future Research and Reflexivity Summary.**

This chapter concludes the thesis by summarising the main findings, followed by a summary of the academic, theoretical, methodological and managerial contributions of the study. In addition, the chapter presents its limitations and recommendations for future research.

Given the above, the thesis structure on LMs' involvement in TM in the CSO is shown in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2: Thesis structure on LMs' involvement in TM in CSO**



## **Chapter 2: Review of LMs' involvement in TM**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter aims to present the current knowledge about line managers' (LM) involvement in talent management (TM), to highlight the research gap for the study. To achieve this aim, the literature review exercise was guided by the three research questions.

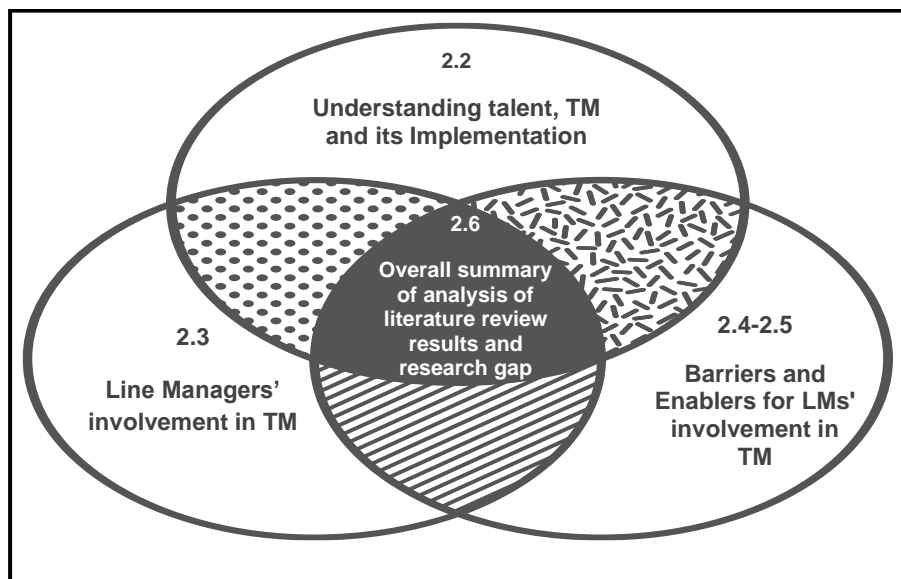
Therefore, in the first section of the chapter, the results of the literature review are presented according to the first research question under the theme of understanding the terms "talent", "TM", and "TM implementation". The most important findings are that the term "talent" does not have a universal definition. Consistent with varied definitions of talent, there are also varied definitions of TM. There are also diverse TM philosophies that guide the management of talent. Nevertheless, several contextual factors influence the understanding of talent and TM, and the implementation of TM.

The second section critically assesses the mainstream literature in line with the second research question on LMs' involvement in TM. The key findings were that LMs were involved in several TM practices. However, their level of involvement was mixed. Overall, LMs were less involved in TM. Despite being more involved in operational TM tasks, they were less involved in the TM decision-making process, TM budget and TM expertise. The rationale for such an extent of involvement was attributed to several factors (e.g., enhancing the effectiveness of TM processes and reducing human resource department staff costs).

The third section critically discusses key theoretical suggestions consistent with the third research question, as to the factors that precluded or facilitated the involvement of LMs in TM. The key findings were that multiple barriers (e.g. delegation and alignment factors) and multiple facilitators (e.g. LMs' accountability for TM and TM stakeholders' support for TM) precluded and facilitated the involvement of LMs in TM, to the extent that they contributed to creating and reducing inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM, respectively.

The final section provides an analysis of the results from the comprehensive literature review conducted on the entire topic. The main findings highlight that the existing results do not provide a complete understanding of the overall phenomenon. Most of the studies focused on HRM are based on egalitarian principles, with limited research on TM guided by the doctrine of exclusivity. Moreover, the majority of the studies were conceptual and conducted in specific geographical regions (e.g., Western countries, Asian countries), which differ contextually from the CSO. Several scholars have emphasised the need for more empirical research on LMs' involvement in TM, particularly in less-studied national and industrial contexts. Figure 3 below shows the structure of the literature review sections in this chapter.

**Figure 3 Structure of the literature review sections.**



## **2.2 Understanding the terms “talent”, “TM” and “TM implementation”**

### **2.2.1 Understanding the term “talent”.**

To develop a robust TM programme, organisations need to establish a clear understanding of talent and its boundaries (Tansley 2011:266; Hasan 2016:5). Yet, a significant challenge arises from the fact that talent is subject to diverse interpretations (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013:290; Golubovskaya *et al.*, 2019:4109; Harsch and Festing, 2020:45; Amushila and Bussin 2021:2). This is evident from the existence of multiple definitions with varying connotations (Berger and Berger 2011:4; Iles 2013; McDonnell *et al.*, 2023). For instance, talent can be understood as a leadership skill in certain contexts

(Berger and Berger 2011:4; Wiblen and Marler 2021:2610). In other cases, it is defined as a high performer (Lewis and Heckman 2006:141; Bussin, 2014:46; Letchmiah and Thomas 2017:3; Wiblen and Marler 2021: 2606). Alternatively, talent may refer to individuals with high potential in various contexts (Lewis and Heckman 2006:141; CIPD 2012; Bussin 2014:46). Additionally, talent can be seen as an innate, inherent giftedness that individuals possess from birth (Dries 2013:278-280; Thunnissen and Arensbergen 2015:182; Amushila and Bussin 2021:2).

In an effort to develop an overarching definition, Silzer and Dowell (2010:13-14) proposed a comprehensive definition of organisational talent, which aligns with some of the aforementioned definitions. According to their proposal, talent in an organisation encompasses three aspects. Firstly, it includes an individual's abilities and skills, indicating their capacity to contribute to the organisation. Secondly, it refers to specific individuals who possess particular skills and abilities in specific areas. Lastly, it encompasses talented groups that exhibit exceptional performance and demonstrate the potential to succeed in senior positions.

Upon closer examination, Silzer and Dowell's (2010:13-14) definition of talent aligns with that of Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* (2013:293), which suggests that talent can be viewed from both objective and subjective perspectives. The objective approach regards talent as personal characteristics, such as skills, abilities and qualifications (Gallardo *et al.*, 2013; Kravariti and Johnston 2020:7). These characteristics can either be inherent attributes or acquired through learning and development (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013:293). Additionally, it refers to the commitment and adaptability of employees in various contexts (*ibid.*). On the other hand, the subjective approach defines talent as individuals who possess talent (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013: 295). This can be further classified into *inclusive* subjective talent, where all employees in the organisation are considered talented based on their contributions to the company's missions, and *exclusive* subjective talent, which includes only a select few individuals who contribute significantly to organisational performance and exhibit the potential to excel in higher positions in the future (Buckingham and Vosburgh, 2001; Iles *et al.*, 2010a; Silzer and Church 2010; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013:295).

While there is a lack of consensus among scholars regarding a universal definition of talent, some have criticised this absence, while others have failed to acknowledge the importance of establishing a clear and consistent definition (Williams 2000:34; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013). The absence of a universal definition of talent provides organisations with an opportunity to define talent in their own terms, rather than adhering to universal or prescribed definitions (Tansley 2011:270). Despite the varying interpretations of the term, scholars agree that talented individuals possess the qualities necessary to contribute to the success of an organisation (Huselid *et al.*, 2005; Lawler 2005; Elegbe 2010). Moreover, the definition of talent is significantly influenced by contextual factors, such as the nature of work, type of business, industry and country (CIPD 2007; Elegbe 2010:5; Govaerts *et al.*, 2011:36; Tansley 2011:270; Sparrow and Makram 2015). Recognising that the definition of talent lacks universal agreement and is contingent upon specific contexts, this study adopts the definition put forth by Tansley *et al.* (2007:8). According to their definition, talent refers to “individuals who can make a difference to organisational performance either through their immediate contribution or, in the longer term, by demonstrating the highest level of potential.” Embodied within these individuals is a set of attributes that enable them to transform the performance of the organisation and may include, but are not limited to, experience, qualifications, character and drive, innate skills, knowledge, leadership skills, intelligence, judgement and attitude (Mensah 2015b).

Although the adopted definition may face criticism for its failure to encompass all aspects of talent as perceived by scholars and practitioners, it remains relevant and reasonably comprehensive. This is due to the fact that it includes crucial elements, such as possessing the necessary qualities to contribute to the organisation’s goals, which aligns with multiple diverse definitions of talent (Michales *et al.*, 2001; Huselid *et al.*, 2005; Lawler 2005; Elegbe 2010; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013; Amushila and Bussin 2021:2; Wiblen and Marler 2021).

It is of note that existing definitions of talent were formulated in contexts which differ significantly from the specific nature of the CSO and its operating environment. For instance, the CSO functions as a state bank and a non-profit organisation, with the crucial role of safeguarding the country’s price and financial stability. This unique context is further characterized by factors such as low leadership independence and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the CSO operates within a culturally-collectivist country with a high power distance and a relatively high level of regulation, exemplified



by the enactment of laws. Consequently, it remains uncertain how talent is perceived and understood within such a distinctive context.

Yet, the way talent is understood determines the TM approach adopted by organisations (Turner *et al.*, 2015:58). Thus, the subsequent section provides an understanding of the TM approach.

### **2.2.2 Understanding the term “TM”.**

TM, similar to talent, is replete with numerous diverse definitions, as evidenced by a range of scholarly reviews (Silzer and Dowell 2010; Dries 2013; Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013a). It is intriguing to note that, despite this diversity, these definitions ultimately converge on a common objective of aligning with strategic organisational goals by emphasising individuals, positions, or a combination of both, in TM initiatives (Collings and Mellahi 2009; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013; Jamu 2017). Therefore, this study adopts the definition of TM proposed by Collings and Mellahi (2009:304), who define it as the “systematic identification of key positions that contribute in different ways to the organisation’s sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high-potential and high-performing incumbents to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents and to ensure their continued commitment to the organisation.” Although this definition is criticised for its failure to consider environmental changes related to labour, it still holds relevance due to its strategic and comprehensive nature (Cappelli 1999; Cascio and Boudreau 2016). This is because it builds on influential TM perspectives, approaches and philosophies put forth by renowned scholars in the field (Boudreau and Ramstad 2005; Lewis and Heckman 2006; Collings and Mellahi 2009:305). However, an important question arises: which perspectives influenced the strategic focus and comprehensiveness of the adopted TM definition? Thus, the subsequent section offers TM perspectives for managing talent.

### 2.2.3 TM perspectives/philosophies

First, Lewis and Heckman (2006) are two renowned scholars who contributed to the adopted definition of TM. Their comprehensive examination of various TM definitions revealed three perspectives that organisations employ to manage talent. The first perspective, often known as the Practices Approach (Sparrow *et al.*, 2011:7), and equates TM with traditional HRM (Cooke *et al.*, 2014; McDonnell *et al.*, 2017:93; Collings and Mellahi 2009:305). In this approach, all employees are considered talent and treated equally (Cooke *et al.*, 2014; McDonnell *et al.*, 2017:93). Its objective is to unlock the potential of all employees by ensuring a suitable match between their individual and job profiles, while also building their capacity for future roles (Omar *et al.*, 2012; Cooke *et al.*, 2014; Hirsh 2015). This perspective is particularly suitable for the public sector, as it promotes egalitarianism among employees, aligning with the sector's values of equality (Thunnissen and Buttiens 2017; Kravariti and Johnston 2020). Despite its endorsement of fairness and equality, critics argue that this perspective offers no significant deviation from traditional HRM (Iles *et al.*, 2010a:127).

In contrast, the second perspective regards TM “as a talent pool” with a primary focus on predicting the organisation's employee and staffing needs, as well as overseeing employee progression through different positions” (Lewis and Heckman, 2006:140). Based on their performance, employees are categorised into groups, with high-performing individuals placed in an esteemed talented group, while low-performing employees are placed in a non-talented group (Iles *et al.*, 2010:181b). This perspective follows marketing segmentation principles, where different TM practices are employed based on each group's contribution to organisational performance, with a preference for the elite talented group (Tansley and Foster 2009). The underlying assumption is that the organisation possesses knowledge of its future needs and should develop a plan to fulfil those requirements (Cooke *et al.*, 2014:256). Supporters of this perspective emphasise the importance of utilising metrics and strategic thinking to identify talent pools and make appropriate investments (Sparrow *et al.*, 2014:11). While the disproportionate investment in capacity-building for elite groups enables their success within the organisation (Heslin 2009:420), this perspective can demotivate non-elite groups, making them feel undervalued (Ford *et al.*, 2010:12; Iles 2013:303). Thus, it is not suitable for the public sector, which, as explained above, promotes egalitarianism (Thunnissen and Buttiens 2017).

The third perspective of TM, known as “elite key employees”, posits that the company’s survival hinges on highly skilled employees deemed essential to the organisation (Bratton and Watson 2018:58; Daubner-Siva 2021:253). According to this viewpoint, employees who exhibit exceptional performance or display significant potential are considered talented, and categorised as A players, while those with average or below-average performance are labelled as untalented, and classified as B and C players, respectively (Lewis and Heckman 2006:141; Sparrow *et al.*, 2014:5). TM, in this context, aims to identify a suitable combination of practices that enable the attraction, identification, development and retention of A players, while also supporting B players in enhancing their performance or transitioning out of the organisation (Iles, *et al.*, 2010; Sparrow *et al.*, 2014:5). Furthermore, TM involves allocating a disproportionate number of resources (such as rewards, career opportunities and specialised training) to A players, based on their exceptional contributions (Pfeffer 2001). However, this perspective has its limitations, as it is susceptible to selection bias, exploitation of participants and abuse of power by senior managers (Swales 2021:281). Moreover, it is criticised for potentially undermining teamwork and knowledge-sharing among employees, by emphasising individual achievements and fostering internal competition (Pfeffer 2001:250; Mellahi and Collings, 2010).

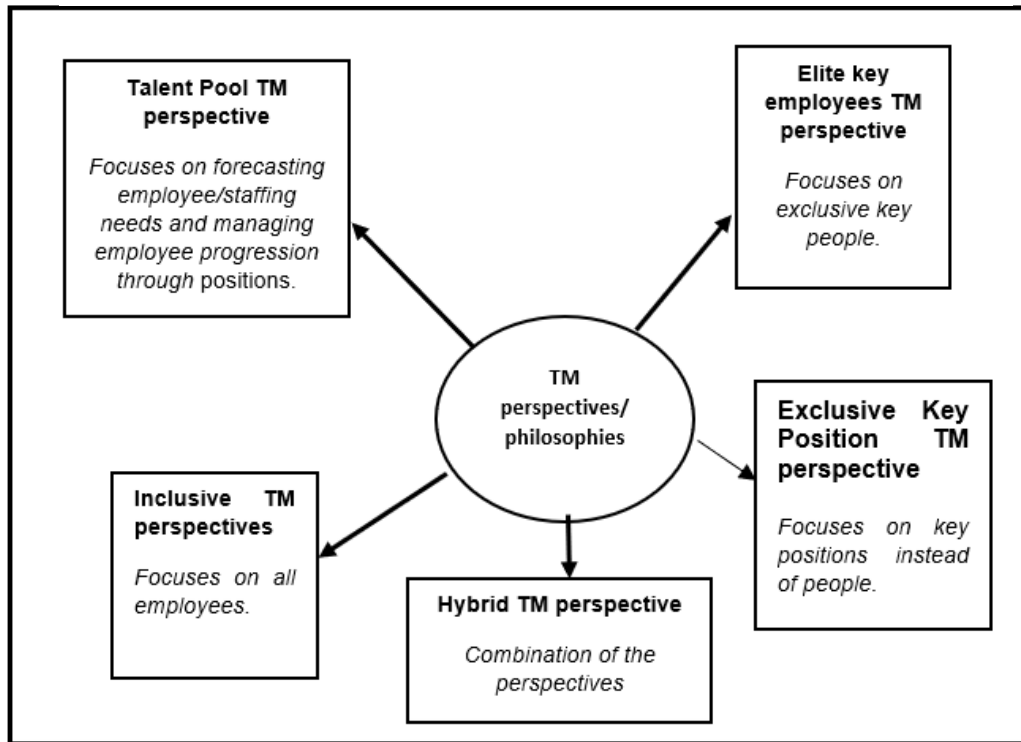
Boudreau and Ramstad (2005:129) defined talent as talent pools (e.g. jobs, roles or competencies) that have the greatest impact on the organisation’s success. Informed by this definition, Collings and Mellahi (2009) introduced the concept of an exclusive key position as a fourth perspective in TM. In contrast to the elite key people perspective, which focuses on identifying key employees (Bratton and Watson 2018:58), the exclusive key position perspective begins by systematically identifying critical positions. Subsequently, potential candidates are identified to fill these positions, and targeted TM practices are implemented to attract and develop them (Huselid *et al.*, 2005; Collings and Mellahi 2009; Mellahi and Collings 2010:145; Sparrow *et al.*, 2011:9; Sparrow and Makram 2015:253; Bratton and Gold 2017:172-173).

The criteria for classifying key positions suggest that positions should be considered key and classified as A positions if they meet the following criteria: (1) the position significantly contributes to the organisation's strategic mission compared to other positions; (2) the position requires the holder to make strategic decisions that can have significant consequences; (3) the job demands a wide range of skills from the position-holder; and (4) mistakes related to the position (such as hiring the wrong talent) can severely impact the organisation (Huselid *et al.*, 2005:3; Sparrow *et al.*, 2011:9). Support positions, on the other hand, indirectly contribute to the organisation's mission by providing support to employees in A position and require individuals with common skills. These positions are classified as B positions (*ibid.*). Finally, positions that make minimal contribution to the organisation's mission and can be outsourced without affecting the organisation's overall performance are considered surplus and classified as C positions (Huselid *et al.*, 2005:3; Sparrow *et al.*, 2011:9).

In this approach, talented employees are promoted to "A" positions based on their performance and potential, and a significant investment of resources is made in TM to develop and retain them (Iles *et al.*, 2010a). While the perspective of creating inequality among employees is criticised, it is acknowledged for its potential to contribute to the organisation's competitive advantage (Huselid *et al.*, 2005:2; Mellahi and Collings 2010:145). Furthermore, since this perspective classifies positions rather than individuals, it has the potential to mitigate the negative emotions associated with categorising employees (Huselid *et al.*, 2005).

Upon closer examination, two distinct perspectives on TM emerge. The first advocates for an exclusive approach, where certain employees considered talented receive different management strategies (Boudreau and Ramstad, 2005; Huselid *et al.*, 2005; Mellahi and Collings, 2010; Sparrow and Makram, 2015). The second promotes an inclusive approach, where all employees are managed equally (Lewis and Heckman, 2006; Iles *et al.*, 2010b; Cooke *et al.*, 2014). Yet the literature also presents the possibility of a hybrid TM approach that combines both exclusive and inclusive approaches (Stahl *et al.*, 2012:26; Turner *et al.*, 2016), predominantly observed in public organisations (Garrow and Hirsh, 2008; Glenn, 2012; Poocharoen and Lee, 2013). This hybrid approach allows for employee classification while reducing negative emotions caused by exclusion (Stahl *et al.*, 2012:26). Figure 4 below illustrates the different TM perspectives, approaches and philosophies.

**Figure 4: TM philosophies/perspectives/approaches**



**Compiled by the author.**

Yet all the various perspectives on TM (e.g., inclusive TM, exclusive pool TM, exclusive key people TM, exclusive key position TM, hybrid TM) fail to take into account the significant influence of national institutions and societal culture on management’s perception of TM. (Cooke *et al.*, 2014:226). Consequently, the results brought to light on TM perspectives cannot be generalised to the CSO due to its uniqueness and the unique context in which it operates (see Chapter 1, Section 1.6). Consequently, it remains unclear how talent is to be managed through the lens of TM philosophies in such a unique context.

While the section has provided existing varied interpretations of TM, it has not provided the underlying debates surrounding TM that in some ways inform the differing perspectives on it. Thus, the subsequent section is devoted to examining TM debates.

## **2.2.4 Fundamental debates behind TM perspectives/philosophies**

The comprehension of TM and its implementation would be incomplete if the underlying TM debates were to be left out of discussion. This is because TM perspectives and philosophies are shaped by these debates (Kwon and Jang 2021:95). Multiple debates have influenced TM philosophies, such as that between innate and acquired abilities; inclusive and exclusive approaches; subjective and objective viewpoints; contextual and transferable perspectives; and the conflict between HRM and TM (Cheese *et al.*, 2008:82; Silzer and Dowell, 2010; Dries, 2013; Meyers and Woerkom, 2014; Sparrow *et al.*, 2014).

### **2.2.4.1 Innate versus developable debate.**

The debate over innate versus developable talent centres on whether talent is fixed and unchangeable, or flexible and can be developed (Meyers *et al.*, 2013; Bolander *et al.*, 2017:1525; Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou, 2019:3858; Pantaouvakis and Karakasnaki, 2019:279; Meyers *et al.*, 2020:563). Advocates of the innate perspective see talent as an inherent quality that one is born with, leading to above-average performance in a specific area (Tansley, 2011:268; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013; Iles, 2013; Meyers *et al.*, 2013:307; Lawless *et al.*, 2019). They believe talent is rare and possessed by only a few individuals (Meyers *et al.*, 2013:314; Swailes, 2013:33). This viewpoint shapes TM efforts to attract, identify and retain those with exceptional innate talent (*ibid.*:314). On the other hand, proponents of the “talent is developable” perspective believe that talent can be cultivated, suggesting that anyone can contribute significantly to an organisation’s goals with proper developmental opportunities (Ericsson *et al.*, 2007:116; Meyers *et al.*, 2013; Yildiz and Esmer 2021). This approach shifts the focus of TM towards practices that enhance employees’ knowledge, skills and abilities. (Meyers *et al.*, 2013:315; Latukha, 2015:1062; Golubovskaya *et al.*, 2019:4118). Nonetheless, Silzer and Dowell (2010:13) observed that in real-world organisations, the debate is often nuanced, as individuals typically possess a combination of learned and innate attributes.

#### **2.2.4.2 Exclusive versus inclusive debate**

The ongoing debate between exclusive and inclusive approaches to TM revolves around how organisations perceive and handle talent. The exclusive approach sees talent as embodied by specific high-value individuals who can significantly contribute to the organisation's goals in the short and long term (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013; Lawless *et al.*, 2019). Advocates argue that a company's competitiveness depends on a small number of exceptionally talented employees (Bratton and Watson, 2018:58). Therefore, the exclusive approach aims to attract, acquire, identify, develop and retain these select individuals to enhance organisational performance (Swailes, 2013:35). Yet critics of exclusivity point out ethical challenges in identifying talented employees, as common methods like performance appraisals may contain biases that compromise objectivity and lead to inequality among employees (Swailes, 2013:35). On the other hand, the inclusive perspective treats all employees as talented individuals and focuses on providing opportunities for them to cultivate and utilize their abilities (Cooke *et al.*, 2014; Swailes *et al.*, 2014). This approach emphasises nurturing and developing the capabilities of all employees throughout the organisation, fostering motivation and commitment due to its egalitarian principles (Adebola, 2017:48). Although this approach is believed to foster motivation and commitment among employees due to its egalitarian principles, it is nevertheless a costly option for managing talent (Lin, 2006; Jokhio, 2018:201).

#### **2.2.4.3 Subjective versus Objective debate**

In the context of the subjective versus objective debate, the former perspective defines talent as the employees within the organisation (Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013b:327; Mensah, 2015b:548; Bolander *et al.*, 2017:1525). However, in order for employees to be classified as talent, they need to possess qualities that are rare, valuable, inimitable and not easily replaceable (Barney 1991:102; Dries, 2013:279; Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013b:327; Mensah 2015b: 548). On the other hand, from an objective standpoint, talent refers to the qualities or attributes that individuals possess, such as knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs), which enable them to contribute to the company (Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013b: 327; Bolander *et al.*, 2017: 1525; Mensah, 2015b: 548; Yildiz and Esmer, 2021:30).

#### **2.2.4.4 Contextual versus transferable debate**

The debate between contextual and transferable perspectives revolves around how talent is perceived. It can be seen either as a qualification that remains constant, regardless of different contexts, or as a dynamic trait that develops and adapts in specific contexts (Dries, 2013:280; Bolander *et al.*, 2017:1525). The contextual school of thought, as described by Dries (2013:280), contends that talent is influenced by the environment in which it is nurtured. Conversely, the transferable school of thought argues that talented individuals can showcase their abilities irrespective of the work environment.

#### **2.2.4.5 HRM versus TM debate**

There are two contrasting viewpoints in the TM and HRM debate (Iles *et al.*, 2010a:127;). The first perspective sees TM and HRM differently (Duttagupta, 2005:2; Iles *et al.*, 2010b:180; Dries, 2013:274; Cui *et al.*, 2018:16), with HRM serving as a facilitator for various processes, while TM requires commitment from the entire organisation and focuses on a talent-oriented mindset (Cheese *et al.*, 2008:82; Sparrow *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, HRM follows egalitarian principles and benefits all employees, while TM operates based on segmentation and focuses on attracting, developing, and retaining talented individuals (Chuai *et al.*, 2008; Sarmad *et al.*, 2013:3610). In contrast, the second viewpoint considers TM and HRM similarly (Lewis and Heckman 2006:140; Iles *et al.*, 2010b:180; Al Ariss *et al.*, 2014:173; Cooke *et al.*, 2014:226; Festing and Schäfer, 2014:263), both aiming to ensure that the right people with the necessary skills are in appropriate positions (Chuai *et al.*, 2008; Sarmad *et al.*, 2013; 3611). Both TM and HRM rely on support from stakeholders, including the HRM department staff, line managers and senior management. (Chuai *et al.*, 2008:905). Furthermore, both TM and HRM employ similar practices for managing people (Lewis and Heckman, 2006; Chuai *et al.*, 2008; Sarmad *et al.*, 2013). Organisations that align with this perspective tend to incorporate TM within their HRM policies and practices, as evidenced by Cooke *et al.* (2014:231), who unearthed TM activities carried out in HRM policies and practices.

Acknowledging both sides, this study recognises that TM and HRM are distinct terms but share commonalities, including certain HRM practices and the involvement of LMs in their implementation. The study proceeds to explore TM practices that overlap with HRM and, in subsequent sections, discusses HRM practices shared with TM.



### **2.2.5. HRM/TM practices for operationalising TM programme.**

HRM practices play a crucial role in implementing TM initiatives (Silzer and Dowell, 2010; Tarique and Schuler, 2014:179). Yet scholars disagree on which HRM practices should be part of TM (Morton, 2004; Kalamas *et al.*, 2008; Silzer and Dowell, 2010). Silzer and Dowell (2010:19-20) found a consensus on the list of HRM practices for TM, but their frequency of incorporation varies. Some practices are frequently included, some occasionally and some not at all (*ibid.*). The most common HRM practices included in TM are recruitment, selection, training, development, performance management, promotion, retention initiatives, reward and recognition, and succession management (Silzer and Dowell, 2010:19-20).

Expanding on the categorisation proposed by Silzer and Dowell (2010:19-20), other scholars have classified HRM practices specific to TM into five functional categories: (1) talent planning practices; (2) talent acquisition practices; (3) talent retention and engagement practices; (4) talent assessment and compensation practices; and (5) talent development practices (Elegbe, 2010:7; Hatum, 2010; Bethke-Langenegger *et al.*, 2011; Tarique and Schuler, 2014:180).

However, the effectiveness of HRM practices in facilitating the implementation of TM depends on their integration and contextual factors surrounding TM implementation. (Elegbe, 2010:5; Bethke-Langenegger *et al.*, 2011; Egerova *et al.*, 2013; Tarique and Schuler, 2014). Thus, the subsequent section is intended to discuss issues on contextual aspects of TM.

## **2.2.6. TM implementation, context, and relevant analysis tools**

The field of TM is highly influenced by its contextual nature (Tarique and Schuler, 2014). The literature on TM offers insights into diverse contextual factors that impact the implementation of TM initiatives. Moreover, scholars have developed tools to analyse how these contextual factors shape the implementation of TM.

First, there are claims in the literature that TM implementation is affected by institutional forces (Sidani and Al Ariss, 2014:217; Kravariti and Johnston, 2020; Tyskbo, 2021). Institutions are defined as “social structures that have attained a high degree of resilience which are composed of cultural-cognitive, normative and regulative elements that together with associated activities and resources provide stability and meaning to social life” (Scott, 2001:48). To comprehend how institutional forces impact TM implementation in different contexts, researchers have employed concepts from institutionalism literature (Sidani and Al Ariss 2014:217; Jamu 2017; Thunnissen and Buttiens 2017; Kravariti and Johnston 2020; Tyskbo 2021). One of these concepts is institutional isomorphism, which is valued for its ability to elucidate the adoption and implementation of TM practices within organisations, as well as the reasons behind non-implementation (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Sidani and Al Ariss 2014:217; Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen 2016; Adebola 2017; Jamu 2017; Kravariti and Johnston 2020; Thunnissen and Buttiens 2017; Tyskbo 2021).

Institutional isomorphism refers to the influences that compel organisations operating in a shared context, initially exhibiting dissimilar characteristics during their early stages, to become more alike and adopt similar practices compared to those not in the same context (Hawley 1968:334; DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Building on the work of Meyer (1979) and Fennell (1980), DiMaggio and Powell (1983:149) identified two distinct forms of isomorphism: competitive and institutional. Competitive isomorphism assumes a rational system that emphasizes market competition, the ability to switch niches, and fitness measures that are relevant in domains where free and open competition exists (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150). While competitive isomorphism is recognized for explaining the early adoption of innovations that lead to divergent organisational practices, it is criticized for inadequately explaining why modern organisations in the same field tend to converge in their operations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150; Adebola 2017:66). Institutional isomorphism, thus, addressed the weakness associated with competitive isomorphism by incorporating institutions whose roles, actions and demands tend to influence organisations’

behaviours towards convergence. A central claim for institutional isomorphism by DiMaggio and Powell (1983:150) is that, alongside competition for resources and customers, organisations also compete for political power, institutional legitimacy and social and economic fitness. This competition leads them to adopt similar practices, resulting in homogeneity in their operations. Therefore, organisational actions are not driven solely by aligning with marketing strategies in response to market forces, but also by responding to institutional forces from regulatory agencies and general social expectations of leading organisations on which they depend or with which they share a similar context (Greenwood and Hinings 1996; Wellis and Hankin 2005:269; Jamu 2017:34). Based on this foundation, DiMaggio and Powell (1983:150) assert that institutional isomorphism is a valuable tool for understanding the politics and rituals prevalent in many modern organisations. However, a key question arises: what guidance does institutional isomorphism offer for analysing organisational contexts? In line with DiMaggio and Powell (1983), the classifications of isomorphism – coercive, mimetic and normative – provide guidance for analysing organisational contexts.

Coercive isomorphism encompasses the various pressures, both explicit and implicit, exerted on organisations by external entities on which they depend, as well as societal expectations within which organisations operate (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150). These pressures typically arise from political influences and issues of legitimacy (Zsidisin *et al.*, 2005:3410). They involve the state and other significant actors compelling organisations to adopt specific practices under the threat of sanctions (Boxenbaum and Jonsson 2017:79). Such pressures can manifest as requirements to comply with employment laws, persuasive tactics, invitations to collaborate or governmental directives on operational protocols (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150; Thunnissen and Buttiens 2017:395). For instance, in Malawi, Jamu (2017:35) noted that universities consistently had to meet the government's accreditation criteria set by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE).

Mimetic isomorphism refers to the influence of environmental uncertainties that leave organisations uncertain about the processes leading to desired outcomes, compelling them to imitate successful organisations in order to survive (Thunnissen and Buttiens 2017:395; Adebola 2017:67). It represents a type of pressure that leaves organisations with no alternative but to adopt practices employed by successful organisations that have previously effectively addressed the challenges (Sidani and Al Ariss 2014:217; Jamu 2017:35). Adebola (2017:67) highlights that mimetic isomorphism is evident in

competitive pressures that drive organisations to proactively attract top talent. Consequently, organisations are compelled to emulate TM practices implemented by successful organisations facing similar challenges (Sidani and Al Ariss 2014:217; Jamu 2017:35). Given the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, organisations worldwide have struggled to navigate the crisis, making the concept of mimetic isomorphism particularly relevant in understanding through the lens of TM implementation how the CSO responded to the pandemic.

Normative isomorphism refers to pressure of culture professionalisation (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983:152; Thunnissen and Buttiens, 2017:395). “Professionalisation” here refers to the collective efforts of members within an occupation to define the methods and conditions of their work, exerting control over professional development (Larson, 1977:49-52). Normative isomorphism encompasses two sources of influence (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983:152). The first involves formal training provided by universities, which promotes the establishment of professional norms among managers and their staff (*ibid.*). The second pertains to professional and trade associations that establish normative rules and regulations regarding organisational and professional conduct (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983:152).

Although institutional isomorphism is recognised for its capacity to explain the factors (such as political influence, uncertainty and normative pressures) that lead organisations to adopt or not adopt TM, the concept is criticised for its inability to account for the variations in TM strategies, structures and practices among organisations operating in the same field (Thornton and Ocasio 2008:101; Thunnissen and Buttiens 2017:395).

Besides institutional forces, TM is also influenced by cultural forces (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020:460). The next section therefore critically discusses the impact of culture on TM implementation.

### **2.2.6.1 Impact of culture on TM implementation**

Culture is a multifaceted concept that influences values, attitudes and behaviour, often at a subconscious level (Dowling *et al.*, 2008;9-10; Stan 2012:11). It can be defined as “the collective mental programming that distinguishes one group from another” (Hofstede, 2011:3). Understanding culture is crucial for key stakeholders in TM, as it allows them to gain insights into TM problems and find effective solutions within the specific cultural context (Agarwal, 2016:3). To aid decision-makers in comprehending diverse national or organisational cultures and their potential impact, Hofstede (2012) developed a cultural dimensions theory that quantifies different nations’ cultural traits. The theory includes dimensions such as collectivism vs. individualism, power distance and uncertainty avoidance.

Collective vs. individualistic cultures refer to the degree of integration into social groups (Hofstede 2011:11). Collectivist cultures have strong, cohesive ingroups with lifelong protection in exchange for loyalty (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010:515); while individualistic cultures have weaker interpersonal bonds, and individuals primarily provide for themselves and their immediate families (Hofstede 2011:11). In the workplace, these cultural differences have significant implications. In collective cultures, the group’s well-being is prioritised over individual needs, while individualistic cultures focus on those very needs (Agarwal, 2016:4). Exclusive TM approaches are more effective in individualistic cultures, while inclusive TM approaches are better suited for collectivist cultures (Rijamampianina and Carmichael, 2005; Stan, 2012; Agarwal, 2016:4; Metcalfe *et al.*, 2021). The CSO operates in a country with a predominantly collectivist culture (i.e. Malawi). However, it is uncertain whether the existing literature’s assertions on how TM unfolds in such a cultural environment align or diverge with the actual situation in the CSO context (Jones, 1989:81; Blethen, 2018:6).

Uncertainty avoidance culture refers to how a culture shapes its members’ comfort level in unstructured situations (Hofstede, 2011:10). There are two categories: strong uncertainty avoidance culture, which avoids ambiguity and prefers established norms; and weak uncertainty avoidance culture, which embraces ambiguity and change (Hofstede, 2011:10; Stan, 2012:12; Agarwal, 2016:6). Cultures with weak uncertainty avoidance tend to prefer an exclusive TM approach, due to its risk-taking ideologies, while strong uncertainty avoidance cultures lean towards an inclusive TM approach, emphasising equal treatment regardless of individual achievements (Hofstede, 2011:10; Agarwal, 2016:7).

The CSO operates in Malawi, which has a neutral uncertainty avoidance culture, but it is uncertain whether existing literature aligns with the actual TM situation in this context (Blethen, 2018).

Power distance culture refers to the level of acceptance of unequal power distribution within institutions and organisations in a country (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010:521). There are two categories of culture: high power distance culture and low power distance culture. In high power distance cultures, superiors dictate instructions to subordinates, hierarchical inequality is accepted, and power is acquired based on non-merit criteria like age and seniority. In contrast, low power distance cultures involve consultation with subordinates, acceptance of hierarchy for convenience in role differentiation, and power acquisition through meritocracy (Hofstede 2011:9; Agarwal 2016:6). In a high-power distance culture, TM faces challenges, because employee differentiation is primarily based on factors like age and seniority, which contradicts the performance-based differentiation often used in TM approaches (Agarwal 2016:6). Yet, the CSO operates in Malawi, a country characterised by a high-power distance culture. However, it is uncertain whether the existing literature's assertions about how TM functions in such a cultural environment align with or diverge from the actual situation in the CSO's context.

However, Hofstede's cultural dimension theory faces criticism for its tendency to generalise that countries possess a singular culture, disregarding the existence of potential distinct subcultures within a given country (Nyiri and Ybema 2015; Beugelsdijk *et al.*, 2017).

Aside from the institutional forces and culture, the COVID-19 pandemic also influenced the implementation of TM. Thus, the subsequent section presents the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on TM implementation.

### **2.2.6.2 Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on TM implementation**

The COVID-19 pandemic had diverse effects on TM in the past two years. First, concerns arose regarding the pandemic's impact on talent attraction and retention in Dubai, particularly due to travel restrictions and border closures that hindered labour mobility between countries (Haak-Saheem, 2020: 299). These measures had a negative impact on organisations relying on foreign labour (Caligiuri *et al.*, 2020:697; Haak-Saheem, 2020:299).

Second, the pandemic resulted in a significant decline in revenue for many organisations, leading to austerity measures, hiring freezes and layoffs (Montenovo *et al.*, 2020; Aguinis and Burgi-Tian, 2021:234). For instance, tech companies in Europe, the United Kingdom (UK) and North America halted talent recruitment (Wauters, 2020; Wills and Towers Watson survey, 2020), while Silicon Valley tech firms in the USA laid off a substantial number of employees (McBride and Conon, 2020; Aguinis and Burgi-Tian, 2021:234).

Third, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a shift in how organisations approached their work. Many companies transitioned from traditional office-based work to virtual work arrangements (Bartik *et al.*, 2020; Haak-Saheem, 2020:300; McKinsey, 2020:29; Aguinis and Burgi-Tian, 2021:234; Magalasi, 2021). Government directives and safety measures mandated employees to work from home, consequently increasing reliance on technology (Pass and Ridgway, 2022:254). Some companies provided support to employees, such as Wi-Fi access, loans for office equipment and other benefits, to facilitate remote work (Towers Watson survey, 2020)

In Malawi, the public sector implemented a rotational shift system during a partial lockdown to curb the spread of the virus. Some employees worked remotely, while others had to be present in the office (Magalasi, 2021:2).

However, it is worth noting that most studies on this topic focus on America, Europe and the East, whose context might differ from that in Malawi. Additionally, these studies do not cover the impact of the pandemic on talent development when transitioning from office-based to remote work. Furthermore, there is a lack of insights into the effects of the pandemic on TM implementation through the lens of LMs.

### **2.2.7. Summary of understanding of talent, TM and its implementation**

This section has discussed the literature on TM implementation. It emphasized the significance of defining talent clearly for building a robust TM programme, but acknowledged that there is no universally agreed-upon definition due to its context-dependent nature. Various TM philosophies, such as inclusive, talent pool, elite key employees, exclusive key positions and hybrid TM, were also explored. Debates surrounding TM and its operationalization through HRM practices were highlighted. The implementation of TM is influenced by contextual factors, including institutional forces, organisational culture and the impact of events like the COVID-19 pandemic. However, most studies were conducted in Western, Asian and only a few in African countries, leaving a gap in understanding TM implementation in less-studied contexts, such as the unique context of the CSO. (see Chapter 1, Section 1.6).

However, the responsibility for TM implementation goes beyond human resource department staff, as other stakeholders, particularly LMs, also play a vital role in its success (Kaewsaeng-on, 2016:4). The following section will delve into the literature on LMs' involvement in TM.



### 2.3 LMs' involvement in TM

This second section of the literature review focuses on the involvement of LMs in TM. There is a shortage of research dedicated solely to this area, with most studies focusing on LMs' involvement in HRM. To explore LMs' involvement in TM, the review adopted an approach of identifying TM-related aspects in HRM studies involving LMs; the role of LMs in TM provided by the limited studies on the subject; and LMs' involvement in HRM. The results presented in this section consist of a compilation of insights covering various themes. These include LMs' involvement in HRM; the transmission of HRM to LMs; the role of LMs in HRM; LMs' involvement in single HRM practices treated as TM practice; devolution of HRM to LMs; and a few studies on the role of LMs in TM.

Overall, the review underscores the critical roles that LMs play in TM which in turn significantly influences employee and organisation performance as evidenced by various studies (Alfes et al 2018; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Perry and Kulick 2008). These studies, along with (Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; Bratton and Watson 2018; Tyskbo 2020; Hirsh 2015), claim that the conventional roles of LMs in TM include identifying talent within their teams, managing performance, guiding career development, fostering employee engagement, planning for succession, and implementing TM programme. The rationale behind LMs participation in TM is based on their close proximity to employees, allowing them to comprehend both the employees and their respective roles effectively (D'Annunzio-Green 2018; Brewster *et al* 2015). Moreover, LMs are involved in TM to carry out tasks that HRM professionals consider routine and time-consuming, allowing HRM professionals to allocate more time to strategic HRM-related matters (Budhwar 2000b:294; Kehoe and Han 2020:114; Stanton *et al.*, 2010; Mitchell *et al.*, 2013; Renwick 2013). Yet, the extent of LMs' involvement in these roles remains unclear in existing research (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al* 2020). Therefore, this review aims to shed light on insights regarding LMs' roles in TM practices such as talent acquisition and identification, talent development, performance management, TM budgeting, and TM expertise, as highlighted by leading scholars. This focus intends to delineate the gap that this study aims to address. The subsequent section will detail the specific findings from the literature review concerning LMs' involvement in these TM practices.

### **2.3.1. Talent spotting and identification**

Talent spotting and identification involves identifying and selecting talented individuals from both internal and external sources to fill specific roles within an organisation (Fitzgerald, 2016:9). LMs play a crucial role in the effective implementation of talent spotting and identification by formulating job descriptions, shortlisting applicants, arranging interviews and monitoring employees' performance (Hutchinson and Purcell, 2010:364; Yarnall, 2011:516; Fitzgerald, 2016:8; Adebola, 2017:178; Bratton and Watson, 2018:65; Turner, 2018:324). While the activities carried out by LMs in the process entail high involvement in operational tasks in the process (Budhwar 2000b; Conway and Monks 2010; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014), their level of involvement in decision-making is less, as these activities primarily revolve around operational aspects (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Conway and Monks 2010; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Nevertheless, Stahl *et al.*, (2012:8) advocate greater involvement of LMs in TM, emphasising their accountability. Responding to this advocacy, Gautam and Davis (2007:20) conducted a study to assess the integration of HRM practices into organisational strategy, and examining the extent of devolution of HRM to LMs in Nepal. Employing qualitative methodology and data from 26 commercial banks and insurance companies, the study revealed that LMs held exclusive decision-making authority over recruitment and selection in three organisations. Similarly, Budhwar (2000b:293) utilised mixed methods, analysing data from six sectors in the UK, and found that 12.9% of sampled companies entrusted LMs with independent decision-making on HRM practices. Moreover, Lopez-Cotarelo (2018:266) explored the distribution of responsibility for HRM decision-making between LMs and HRM specialists. The study discovered that LMs independently made decisions regarding talent hiring and identification. Likewise, Brewster *et al.* (2015:586) observed that more than half of the organisations studied delegated recruitment decision-making authority to LMs. This implies that LMs were highly involved in the process, as they bore sole responsibility for the decision-making process in this area (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Budhwar 2000b:293; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010:364).

Yet, HRM is a shared responsibility involving varied stakeholders (McDermott *et al.*, 2015). This assertion is supported by Hall and Torrington's (1998:49) investigation into the extent of devolution of HRM to LMs in England, Wales, and Scotland. Using decision-making as a yardstick to measure the level of devolution, the study revealed that LMs made decisions with input from human resource department specialists on recruitment and selection in 17% of the surveyed establishments. Correspondingly, Blayney *et al.*, (2020:457) analysed the devolution of HRM to LMs within the Canadian hospitality industry and found that other stakeholders conducted preparatory work on recruitment with LMs having final say on candidate selection. Finally, Staunton (2014:94) in a study investigating the implementation of TM process in a large multinational company, found that LMs held the ultimate authority over promotions, while HRD functions assumed expert and consultative roles. Thus, in terms of decision-making, LMs are more involved in the process, even when decision-making is shared, as they hold that primary decision-making authority (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

In contrast, Adebola (2017:178) discovered in a study focusing on TM practices in private sector organisations in the UK that LMs suggested employees to HRM for inclusion in the TM programme. Similarly, Hirsh (2015:5) observed that LMs took part in review meetings where, alongside other committee members (such as managers from different departments), they assessed employees' potential and collaborated on succession plans based on the evaluations. Likewise, Jokhio (2018:195) acknowledged that LMs proposed candidates for inclusion in the talent pool. The involvement of LMs in talent identification is considered moderate, as their role is mostly limited to proposing decisions, with other stakeholders holding the primary responsibility for talent acquisition and identification decisions (Budhwar 2000b:293; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Finally, a body of knowledge exists claiming that LMs were completely excluded from talent acquisition and identification decisions (Hall and Torrington 1998:49; Budhwar 2000b:293; Gautam and Davis 2007:20; Jamu 2017). In Malawi, for example, Jamu (2017) undertook a study with the objective of examining the utilisation of TM practices by universities in developing countries like Malawi, particularly focusing on their efficacy in attracting, developing and retaining academic talent. Employing qualitative methodology, the study revealed that LMs were entirely bypassed during the recruitment of academic personnel at a religious universities. This was the case as the chancellor and vice-chancellor

at times used the poaching method without involving LMs. Similarly, a study conducted by Dzimbiri (2016:15) in the Malawian public service revealed that LMs were not part of the talent acquisition process for some positions, as recruitment interviews were conducted by the relevant Ministry's Commission. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the involvement of LMs in the talent acquisition and identification process yields varied results, spanning from low through medium to high involvement.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the extent of LMs' involvement in talent spotting and identification varies, with some instances showing low involvement, while others demonstrate medium to high levels of involvement. Yet, most of these findings stem from research concentrating on HRM rather than TM and were carried out in Western settings. This research thus expands our understanding of TM implementation, especially by shedding light on the degree of LMs' in talent acquisition and identification within the CSO.

### **2.3.2. Talent development**

Talent development is a crucial aspect of TM, alongside talent acquisition and identification (CIPD, 2011; Scullion and Collings, 2011; CIPD, 2019). Its objective is to nurture talent for both present and future work (Hirsh, 2015:4). The literature suggests different talent development approaches, including inclusive<sup>3</sup>; inclusive social<sup>4</sup>; exclusive elite<sup>5</sup>; exclusive key role<sup>6</sup>; and hybrid approaches<sup>7</sup> (Ford *et al.*, 2010:4; Iles *et al.*, 2010b:182; Garavan *et al.*, 2012:7). Effective implementation of these options relies on the involvement of LMs and other stakeholders (Stahl *et al.*, 2012:29; Evans, 2015; Hirsh, 2015).

The mainstream literature shows that LMs are involved in TM by conducting training needs analysis (TNA) and facilitating training programmes (Manafa *et al.*, 2009; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; Hirsh 2015:5; CIPD 2019). This implies that LMs are more

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<sup>3</sup> *Inclusive approach* ensures that talent development opportunities are accessible to all employees.

<sup>4</sup> *Inclusive social approach* focuses on the development of social capital through talent development initiatives.

<sup>5</sup> *Exclusive elite approach* focuses on providing talent development opportunities exclusively to a select group of talented employees.

<sup>6</sup> *Exclusive key role talent development approach* focuses on developing identified talent to fulfil crucial positions.

<sup>7</sup> *A hybrid talent development approach* combines any of these options.

involved in operational talent development as their role was limited to operational tasks (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde, 2014).

However, Hall and Torrington (1998:49) undertook a research endeavour aimed at assessing the degree of devolution of HRM functions to LMs across England, Wales, and Scotland. Employing a mixed-methods approach and utilising decision-making as a metric for gauging involvement levels, the study revealed that LMs held exclusive decision-making authority in training and development matters in merely 5% of the surveyed enterprises. Likewise, Staunton (2014:94), in an investigation focusing on the implementation of TM processes within a prominent multinational corporation, observed that LMs were entrusted with final decision-making responsibilities concerning talent development initiatives. This implies that LMs were highly involved in talent development decision-making, as they alone made final decisions on talent development (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

In contrast, Gautam and Davis (2007:20) conducted a study aimed at exploring the extent to which HRM practice was integrated into organisational strategy and devolved to LMs in Nepal. Employing a qualitative methodology and drawing data from 26 commercial banks and insurance companies, the study found that LMs, in collaboration with HRM specialists, were involved in talent development responsibilities with LMs having primary responsibility on decision making across twelve (12) companies. Likewise, Budhwar (2000b:293) identified that LMs shared responsibility with HRM specialists, with LMs assuming primary decision-making roles in 22.5% of the surveyed companies. This implies that LMs were more involved in talent development decisions, as they were primarily responsible for making the decision, even though the process involved collaboration with others (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

On the other hand, Hall and Torrington (1998) conducted research in England, Wales, and Scotland to explore how HRM responsibilities were delegated to LMs. Their study, which employed a mixed methodology and assessed decision-making involvement, revealed that HRM professionals and LMs shared responsibility in many organisations. Specifically, HRM professionals had the primary decision-making role in 43% of the surveyed organisations. Similarly, in Malawi, Manafa *et al.* (2009) discovered that LMs recommended employees for training to the District Health Management Teams (DHMT) within the Ministry of Health. This implies that LMs had a moderate level of involvement

in talent development decision-making, as they participated either through consultation or by proposing talent development decisions (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018).

Finally, Budhwar (2000b:293) conducted research across six industries in the UK, revealing that in 15.1% of the surveyed companies, LMs were entirely excluded from involvement in talent development decisions, with these determinations being solely made by HRM specialists. Similarly, Hall and Torrington (1998:49) identified that in 6% of the sampled companies, LMs had no role in decision-making regarding training and development, as these decisions were exclusively handled by HRM specialists. This implies that LMs were less involved in these decisions (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the extent of LMs' involvement in talent development varies, with some instances showing low involvement, while others demonstrate medium to high levels of involvement. Yet, most of these findings stem from research concentrating on HRM rather than TM and were carried out in Western settings. This research thus expands our understanding of TM implementation, especially by shedding light on the degree of LMs' involvement in talent development within the CSO.

### **2.3.3. Performance management**

Performance management is a crucial phase in the TM cycle, encompassing various activities that aim to achieve company goals through encouraging employee performance, addressing misconduct, offering guidance and conducting performance reviews and disciplinary actions (Lopez-Cotarelo 2018:14). Yet, the involvement of LMs and other stakeholders in the practice's implementation is essential for its effectiveness (Fitzgerald 2016; Evans 2015; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018). Literature presents varied extents of LMs' involvement in performance management (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Nik Mat 2014). For instance, Nik Mat's (2014) research on LMs' roles in HRM within Malaysian airports revealed their involvement in setting performance targets, monitoring progress, and providing feedback to subordinates. This implies that LMs were highly involved in operational tasks of performance management and less involved in decision making process as the roles performed were operational (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010:364; Cascon-Pereira and

Valverde 2014; Nik Mat 2014; Fitzgerald 2016:13; Bratton and Watson 2018:65; CIPD 2019:4; Hutchinson and CIPD 2019:4).

However, Mansor *et al.* (2011:2342) conducted a study with the objective of investigating the perception of LMs regarding their involvement in HRM activities. Their findings revealed that LMs were universally active in the process of performance appraisal. Similarly, Blayne *et al.* (2020:457) investigated the factors influencing the devolution of HRM practices within the Canadian hospitality industry. They observed that LMs were solely responsible for conducting performance appraisals and subsequently forwarding the related documentation to HRD. Likewise, Hall and Torrington (1998:49) discovered that in 12% of the surveyed establishments, LMs were solely responsible for making decisions related to performance appraisals. In terms of depth, the studies suggest that LMs were highly involved in performance management as they made performance appraisal decisions alone (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

In contrast, Keegan *et al.*, (2012:3099) conducted a study on HRM and found that LMs played a predominant role in decision making on performance appraisal compared to other stakeholders across four project-oriented companies located in the Netherlands, Austria, the UK, and the USA. Similarly, Hall and Torrington (1998:49) observed that 42% of the sampled establishments, LMs made decisions regarding performance appraisal in consultation with HRM specialists. In terms of depth, the studies suggest that LMs were highly involved in performance management as they bore primary responsibility for performance management decisions (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

On the other hand, Nik Mat (2014:114) conducted a study on the HRM role of LMs in Malaysia and found that LMs appraised employees at X and Y airports. However, the ultimate authority over the results of these performance appraisals rested with the heads of the respective units. Consequently, LMs were primarily responsible for suggesting performance appraisal scores to the unit heads. Similarly, Valverde *et al.* (2006:627) observed a scenario where HRD collaborated with LMs in the performance appraisal process, but HR retained the principal responsibility for decision-making. In a related vein, Hall and Torrington (1998:49) noted that in 27% of the organisations examined, LMs were consulted during the performance appraisal decision-making process by human resource management professionals). The findings suggest that LMs had a moderate level of

involvement, as they were partially included in decisions through consultation or by providing input on performance appraisal decisions (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the impact of LMs in performance management varies, with involvement levels ranging from low through medium to high. Yet, most of these findings stem from research concentrating on HRM rather than TM and were carried out in Western settings. This research thus expands our understanding of TM implementation, especially by shedding light on the degree of LMs' involvement in performance management within the CSO.

#### **2.3.4. TM expertise**

Scholars have noted that LMs encounter challenges in effectively handling TM tasks (Hall and Torrington 1998:49; Trullen *et al.*, 2020). To tackle this, it has been suggested that LMs can overcome these difficulties by acquiring expertise in TM (Mansor *et al.*, 2011:2350). Evidence from Mansor's study indicates that LM-HRM training empowers them to assume responsibility for talent development (*ibid.*). The significance of LM-TM training lies in its ability to transfer TM knowledge and skills to LMs, enabling them to participate effectively in TM activities (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). The extent of LMs' involvement in acquiring TM expertise depends on the adequacy and effectiveness of their TM training (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Inadequate or insufficient LMs-TM training implies less involvement in the acquisition of TM expertise while sufficient or adequate LMs-TM training signifies more involvement in acquisition of TM expertise (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Concerning the former, in their study, Golik *et al.*, (2018:237) investigated the training required for LMs to perform in talent identification processes. They discovered that LMs underwent training led by corporate TM specialists, focusing on tasks such as identifying potential using Jaques' model. Similarly, Kotlyar (2018:690) examined a novel graduate programme designed to foster early leadership development. They observed that one year after joining the organisation, participants in the programme underwent a leadership acceleration initiative aimed at enhancing their leadership skills in preparation for future leadership roles. Likewise, Trullen *et al.*, (2016:456) found that LMs were provided with formal training and supportive materials, including toolkits, to facilitate their effective implementation of Human Resources (HR) policies when introduced by the organisation.



Regarding the later, Hutchinson and Purcell (2010:367) highlighted a notable hindrance in the involvement of LMs in HRM, attributing it to inadequate HRM training. Equally, Budhwar (2000b:293) observed little evidence of training provided to LMs to enable them to conduct performance appraisals and communication. This deficiency was accentuated by Cascon-Pereira and Valverde *et al.* (2014:144), who noted an extreme case where LMs in Hospital A received no training and development to fulfil HRM responsibilities.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the level of LMs' involvement in TM expertise varies from low to medium. Yet, most of these findings stem from research concentrating on HRM rather than TM and were carried out in Western settings. This research thus expands our understanding of TM implementation, especially by shedding light on the degree of LMs' involvement in acquisition of TM expertise within the CSO.

### **2.3.5. Talent Management budget**

The involvement of LMs in the TM budget is crucial, because it empowers them to participate actively in TM practices. Without decision-making power over the budget, their involvement in other TM activities would be meaningless (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). However, according to the literature, the extent of LMs' involvement in the TM budget varies. For instance, Townsend and Russell (2013:175) conducted a study with the objective of examining the collaborative dynamics between managers and employees within Australian workplaces for mutual advancement. Employing a qualitative research approach involving ten case studies, the investigation revealed that LMs were endowed with budgetary autonomy, allowing them a spending limit of \$500 without requiring authorization from higher authorities (*ibid*). Despite the seemingly modest degree of autonomy, this prerogative expedited the resolution of issues (*ibid*). This implies that LMs were heavily involved in the TM budget as they had decision-making powers (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

On the flip side, Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014:156) carried out research to explore if devolution could be segmented into various aspects. They discovered that LMs lacked authority in budgetary decision-making, as their responsibilities were confined to overseeing the TM budget. Likewise, Evans (2015:466) concluded that LMs were only tasked with implementing the budget according to predetermined objectives. This resulted

in LMs having less involvement in the TM budget, as their role was restricted to executing the budget in accordance with the predetermined objectives (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2000; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Considering the findings, it can be concluded that the level of LMs' involvement in the TM budget varies, ranging from low to high involvement. Yet, most of these findings stem from research concentrating on HRM rather than TM and were carried out in Western settings. This research thus expands our understanding of TM implementation, especially by shedding light on the degree of LMs' involvement in TM budget within the CSO.

The question remains: What are the reasons behind the differing levels of LMs' involvement in TM practices? Therefore, the following section presents the results concerning the factors influencing LMs' involvement to varying degrees in TM.

### **2.3.6. Rationale for the extent of involvement of LMs in TM**

The literature offers several varied justifications for involvement of LMs in TM. Firstly, the desire to improve the effectiveness of TM processes has influenced the extent of LMs' involvement in TM (Budhwar 2000b:294; King 2015:10; Fitzgerald 2016; D'Annunzio-Green 2018:10). LMs' close proximity to their colleagues and subordinates, due to the nature of their work (Budhwar 2000b; Brewster *et al.*, 2015; D'Annunzio-Green 2018; King 2015; Kehoe and Han 2020:120), positions them in a better place to understand their needs, strengths, weaknesses and contributions to the organisation (Fitzgerald 2016:9; Ngugi 2016:21; D'Annunzio-Green 2018:10; Blanco and Golik 2021). This knowledge enables LMs to suggest relevant interventions in the TM process, thereby enhancing its effectiveness (Budhwar 2000b:294; King 2015:10; Fitzgerald 2016; Kellner *et al.*, 2016; Ngugi 2016:21; D'Annunzio-Green 2018:10; Golik *et al.*, 2018:234; Tyskbo 2020:832; Blanco and Golik 2021; Knies *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, LMs are involved in TM to expedite problem-solving and decision-making at the line management level, due to their proximity to the issues at hand. (Budhwar 2000b:294; Bainbridge 2015).

Secondly, LMs are involved in TM to carry out tasks that HRM professionals consider routine and time-consuming, allowing HRM professionals to allocate more time to strategic HRM-related matters (Budhwar 2000b:294; Kehoe and Han 2020:114; Stanton *et al.*, 2010; Mitchell *et al.*, 2013; Renwick 2013; Nik Mat 2014:1661; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Bainbridge 2015:849).

Thirdly, LMs are involved in TM to reduce costs by sharing some HRM responsibilities, thereby decreasing the workload on human resource department and potentially reducing the number of HR staff required for the work (Larsen and Brewster 2003:230; Bainbridge 2015:849).

Finally, the motivation for HRM professionals to maintain their relevance in the organisation determines the involvement of LMs in HRM. This is driven by the concern that excessive LMs involvement, particularly in areas like budgeting, may empower LMs and make HRM professionals less significant (Khan 2011).

### **2.3.7 Analysis of the literature results on LMs' involvement in TM**

To this end, the literature results on LMs' involvement in TM indicate that LMs were involved in all TM practices, namely talent acquisition and identification, talent development, performance management, TM expertise and TM budget. Additionally, the results suggest that LMs were more involved in operational tasks across different TM practices. However, their level of involvement in decision-making processes varies, with some studies indicating high involvement, while others suggest moderate or low involvement. The literature also points out several reasons for the varying levels of LMs' involvement in TM, such as leveraging their proximity to employees to enhance the effectiveness of the TM process and delegating operational issues to LMs in order to focus on strategic matters.

While the results provide some insight into the extent of LMs' involvement in TM, they nonetheless do not provide a holistic view of the phenomenon for the following reasons: Firstly, the results mainly come from studies that focused solely on HRM which was guided by egalitarian principles, rather than TM, which are mainly guided by the doctrine of exclusivity. Secondly, most of the relevant TM studies focused on single TM practices, making it difficult to assess whether their level of involvement might be the same across all TM practices or might vary from one practice to another. In addition, the few relevant studies do not provide an in-depth understanding of LMs' involvement in TM (e.g, Hirsh 2015; Fitzgerald 2016). Thirdly, studies that uncovered few traits of LMs' involvement in TM were focused on issues other than LMs' involvement in TM (e.g. Adebola 2017, Golik *et al.*, 2018). Fourthly, most TM studies are conceptual (Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013:1745). Finally, most studies were conducted in the USA, Europe, Asia and the Middle East, and focused on private and multinational organisations; there were very few

in Africa and the banking sector (Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013a:1745; Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen 2016:40; Anlesinya *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, TM research lags in offering TM solutions to organisations, especially in under-studied national and industrial contexts (Thunnissen 2016:57; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020). In line with the above observations and aware that TM is not a “one-size-fits-all” issue, scholars called for more empirically contextualised research specifically focused on the involvement of LMs in TM in a state-owned organisation in Africa (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen 2016; Anlesinya *et al.*, 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Kravariti *et al.*, 2022).

In line with the literature review results, Table 1 provides a summary of LMs’ involvement in TM.

**Table 1: A summary of LMs' involvement in TM and rationale for their involvement**

TM practice (s)	Extent of involvement of LMs in TM (depth and coverage)		Author(s)
Talent acquisition and identification	Operational tasks/coverage	LMs were involved in operational tasks of talent acquisition and identification	Hutchinson and Purcell 2010:364; Bratton and Watson 2018:65; Adebola 2017:178; Yarnall, 2011:516; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Budhwar 2000b; Conway and Monks 2010).
	Decision-making	LMs made decision alone or shared responsibility with HRM but LMs had primary responsibility	Lopez-Cotarelo 2018:266; Brewster <i>et al.</i> , 2015:586; Staunton 2014:58; Wiblen and Marler 2021:2606; Gautam and Davis 2007:20; Budhwar 2000b:293; Cascon-Pereira <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018:266; Gautam and Davis; 2007:20; Brewster <i>et al.</i> , 2015:586; Budhwar 2000b:293; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010:364; Blayney <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Hall and Torrington 1998:49).
		LMs consulted in decision making or made proposals or shared decision responsibility with HRM but HRM held primary responsibility.	Adebola 2017; Watson <i>et al.</i> , 2007; Hall and Torrington 1998:49; Gautam and Davis 2007:20; Budhwar 2000b:293).
		LMs completely left out of decision-making process	Jamu 2017; Gautam and Davis 2007:20; Budhwar 2000b:293; Hall and Torrington 1998:49.
Talent development	Operational tasks/coverage	LMs were involved in operational tasks of talent development	Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; CIPD 2019; Hirsh 2015:5.
	Decision-making	LMs made decision alone or shared responsibility with HRM but LMs had primary responsibility	Staunton 2014:94; Budhwar 2000b:293; Hall and Torrington 1998:49; Gautam and Davis 2007:20
		LMs consulted in decision making or made proposals or shared decision responsibility with HRM but HRM held primary responsibility.	Hirsh 2015; Budhwar 2000b:293; Gautam and Davis 2007:20.
		LMs completely left out of decision-making process	Budhwar 2000b:293; Hall and Torrington 1998:49.
Performance management	Operational tasks/coverage	LMs were involved in operational tasks of performance management	Fitzgerald 2016:13; Bratton and Watson 2018:65; CIPD 2019:4; Nik Mat 2014. Bratton and Watson 2018:65; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010:364; CIPD 2019:4
	Decision-making	LMs made decision alone or shared responsibility with HRM but LMs had primary responsibility	Keegan <i>et al.</i> , 2012:3099; Hall and Torrington 1998:49; Watson <i>et al.</i> , 2007; Mansor <i>et al.</i> , 2011:2342; Blayney <i>et al.</i> , 2020:457; Hall and Torrington 1998:49
		LMs consulted in decision making or made proposals or shared decision responsibility with HRM but HRM held primary responsibility.	Nik Mat 2014; Valverde <i>et al</i> 2006; Hall and Torrington 1998
TM expertise	Adequacy of LM-TM training	LMs acquired TM	Golik <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Trullen <i>et al.</i> , 2016:456 Budhwar; 2000b:293; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010:367; Kotlyar 2018:690.
		Inadequate LMs-TM training	Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Cunningham <i>et al.</i> , 2004:284; Budhwar 2000b:293; Cascon-Pereira <i>et al.</i> , 2006: 144; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010:367
TM budget	TM budget power	Had more financial power	Townsend and Russell 2013:175
		LMs had less financial power	Evans 2015:466; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014:156; Cascon-Pereira <i>et al</i> 2006
Rationale for involving LMs in TM	Rationale for involving LMs in TM	The quest to enhance effectiveness of TM process	Blanco and Golik 2021; Golik <i>et al.</i> , 2018:234; Ngugi 2016:21; Fitzgerald 2016; D'Annunzio-Green 2018:10; King 2015:10; Budhwar 2000b:294; Tyskbo 2020:832; Kellner <i>et al.</i> ,2016; Knies <i>et al.</i> , 2021
		To allow HRM professionals concentrate on strategic HRM-related issues	Kehoe and Han 2020: 114; Bainbridge 2015:849; Renwick 2013; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Budhwar 2000b:294; Nik Mat 2014:1661; Stanton <i>et al.</i> , 2010.
		To reduce HRD labour costs	Bainbridge 2015:849; Larsen and Brewster 2003:230.

**Compiled by the author.**

The involvement of LMs in TM encountered difficulties, which hindered them from fulfilling their prescribed responsibilities as intended. Consequently, a discrepancy arose between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. Nevertheless, some factors facilitated LMs' involvement in TM, ultimately reducing the inconsistency between their prescribed and actual roles. The following sections present the outcomes of the literature review concerning the obstacles to and facilitators of LMs' involvement in TM.

## **2.4 Barriers for LMs' involvement in TM**

This sub-section is the beginning of the third section of the literature review results. In this section, the focus is on presenting the results regarding the barriers to LMs' involvement in TM, about which there is a lack of specific research. Few studies that uncovered the barriers to LMs' involvement in TM focused on issues other than the barriers to LMs' involvement in TM (e.g. Adebola, 2017; Amushila and Bussin, 2021). Nonetheless, there is a plethora of studies on barriers to TM implementation and to LMs' involvement in HRM.

Firstly, Schuler *et al.* (2011) identified several barriers that hindered TM implementation. These encompassed a lack of human resource department knowledge to effectively address TM issues; insufficient involvement of middle managers in TM processes; managers' lack of TM knowledge to make informed decisions; and organisational structural challenges (*ibid.*). Similarly, Jamu (2017) revealed that leadership, policy-practice misalignment and internal resistance negatively impacted the implementation of TM in a public university in Malawi. Additionally, Biru and Hoek (2022) acknowledged that changes in leadership, limited budgetary resources and time constraints for executing TM programmes served as barriers to TM initiatives. Finally, Tafti *et al.*, (2017:18) emphasised that the lack of cooperation among managers was a significant hurdle to successful TM implementation.

In light of the recent challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers conducted a study to examine how it affected the implementation of TM. The studies highlighted concerns about Dubai-based organisations' ability to attract and retain talent, mainly due to travel restrictions and border closures which affected the mobility of foreign labour (Caligiuri *et al.*, 2020:697; Haak-Saheem 2020:229). Similarly, technology companies in Europe, the UK, the USA and Canada suspended or considered freezing talent recruitment due to the pandemic's impact (Wauters 2020).

Secondly, results from the literature review on barriers to LMs' involvement in TM indicate a scarcity of studies addressing this issue. However, there is a plethora of studies on barriers to LMs' involvement in HRM. Collectively, the barriers to LMs' involvement in TM can be classified into five categories: (1) lack of interest of LMs in TM; (2) LMs' multiple roles and increased workloads; (3) lack of organisational support; (4) lack of LMs empowerment; and (5) lack of LM accountability for TM. Each of these barriers hinders LMs' involvement in TM to such an extent that an inconsistency arose between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM.

#### **2.4.1 Lack of interest from LMs in TM**

LMs' lack of interest in TM tasks led to reduced dedication and involvement in TM, and thence to a disconnect between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM (Cunningham and Hyman 1995:12; Šiugždinienė 2008:35; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010:365; Silzer and Dowell 2010:69; Khan 2011:56; Ngugi 2016; Adebola 2017; D'Annunzio-Green 2018). Several reasons contributed to LMs' reluctance to perform TM tasks, including their perception of lacking the necessary knowledge, skills and tools to handle TM responsibilities (Cunningham et al., 2004:284; Brandl et al., 2009:194; Hutchison and Purcell 2010; Khan 2011:54; Bratton and Watson 2018:65; Blayney et al., 2019; Amushila and Bussin 2021). Moreover, there were concerns about dealing with contentious issues like performance-based pay (Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005:289), and the belief that TM tasks should be left to specialists rather than being part of their own responsibilities, along with work overload (Evans 2017; Gadsden et al., 2017:22).

#### **2.4.2. LMs multiple roles and increased workload**

The diversity of roles assigned to LMs has several effects: it increases their workload and interferes with their prioritisation of HRM tasks, leading to a lack of involvement in TM, ultimately creating an inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM (Harris *et al.*, 2002; Watson *et al.*, 2007; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; Gilbert *et al.*, 2011; Khan 2011:57; Mansor *et al.*, 2011:2350; Evans 2015; Evans 2017:3139). Evans (2017:3139) found that role overload prevented LMs from fulfilling their roles as desired, resulting to compromises in HRM responsibilities. Similarly, Hutchinson and Purcell (2010:370) found that when LMs were involved in multiple roles, it created tensions, ambiguity and conflicts that negatively impacted their performance in

HRM roles. Finally, Manafa *et al.* (2009:6) conducted a study in Malawi and found that heavy workloads hindered LMs' ability to effectively supervise Ministry of Health staff.

### **2.4.3 Lack of organisational support for TM programme**

The lack of support from various TM stakeholders, such as senior management and HRM specialists, hinders LMs' involvement in TM and creates a discrepancy between their prescribed and actual involvement (Whittaker and Hutchinson and Purcell 2003:3; Larsen and Brewster, 2003; Marchington 2003; Watson *et al.*, 2007; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; Evans 2015; McDermott, *et al.*, 2015; Blayney *et al.*, 2019; Knies *et al.*, 2021). Insufficient LM-HRM training, poorly designed policies that hinder TM implementation and a lack of HRM advice from professionals contribute to this lack of support (Cunningham and Hyman 1995:19; Renwick 2003:275; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; Teague and Roche 2012; Herington *et al.*, 2013:72; Blayney *et al.*, 2019). Scholars have highlighted how the absence of proper training limits LMs' involvement in TM (Cunningham and Hyman 1995:18-19; Hall and Torrington 1998:49; Harris *et al.*, 2002:222; Stanton *et al.*, 2010: 577; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; Herington *et al.*, 2013:72; Cunningham 2017; Blayney *et al.*, 2019:6). Complex policies set by organisations also pose implementation challenges for LMs' involvement in HRM (Hutchinson and Purcell 2003:1) Additionally, the lack of HRM guidance from human resource department in recruitment processes further restricts LMs' participation in HRM, resulting in a gap between the intended and actual involvement (Evans 2015:468).

Lack of organisational support manifested in resource constraints also hinders LMs' involvement in TM, leading to a disparity between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM (Hutchinson and Purcell 2008:55; Harris and Foster 2010; Hutchison and Purcell 2010; Evans 2015; Adebola 2017; Blayney *et al.*, 2019; D'Annunzio-Green and Ramdhony 2019). Hutchison and Purcell (2010:367) substantiate this claim by finding that budget limitations and understaffing hinder LMs' involvement in HRM. Similarly, several scholars have identified time constraints as a significant factor preventing LMs' involvement in HRM (Larsen and Brewster, 2003; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Evans, 2015; Adebola 2017; Gadsden *et al.*, 2017; D'Annunzio-Green 2018; Blayney *et al.*, 2019).



In summary, insufficient support from TM stakeholders, training gaps and policy challenges, coupled with resource constraints, results in a discrepancy between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM.

#### **2.4.4 Lack of empowerment of LMs in TM**

LMs' lack of empowerment in HRM resulted in their limited involvement in HRM, leading to a mismatch between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Conway and Monks 2010; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Cascon-Pereira *et al.* (2006:140-141) observed that LMs expressed frustration due to their lack of decision-making authority during performance appraisals and training. This frustration resulted from higher-level authorities setting their performance goals and strictly controlling training budgets (*ibid.*). Similarly, Conway and Monks (2010:370) found that the establishment of healthcare executives (HSE) led to increased bureaucracy and centralisation in HRM practices, impeding LMs' ability to carry out HRM tasks like recruitment, and ultimately excluding them from HRM.

Upon closer examination of the studies on barriers to LMs' involvement in HRM/TM, it is evident that they can be categorized into three internal problems, as identified by Teague and Roche (2012). These problems include: (1) delegation problems (McGovern *et al.*, 1997; Purcell and Hutchinson 2007; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; Gilbert *et al.*, 2011; Bos-Nehles *et al.*, 2013; Sikora and Ferris 2014; Evans 2017; Makhecha *et al.*, 2018); (2) alignment problems (Renwick, 2003; Maxwell and Watson, 2006; McConville, 2006; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Hutchinson and Purcell, 2010; Biron *et al.*, 2011; Sumelius *et al.*, 2014; Evans 2015; Bayo-Mariones *et al.*, 2020); and (3) monitoring problems (McGovern *et al.*, 1997). These problems contribute to inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM (refer to Chapter 3 for further discussion).

However, the literature review identified barriers to LMs' involvement in TM, but also revealed facilitating factors that can reduce inconsistency. These factors involve holding LMs accountable for TM, support from TM stakeholders and the disposition of TM stakeholders towards TM. The following section will present these facilitating factors in detail.

## **2.5 Enablers for LMs' involvement in TM**

The literature review's second part of the third section discusses the results on enablers for LMs' involvement in TM. There are few studies that specifically focus on this aspect, but a considerable amount of research exists on enablers for LMs' involvement in HRM. The enablers for LMs' involvement in TM/HRM can be categorized into three groups: (1) making LMs accountable for TM; (2) stakeholders support for TM programme; and (3) the disposition of TM stakeholders to the TM programme.

### **2.5.1 Making LMs accountable for TM**

Making LMs accountable for TM is crucial for facilitating their involvement in the TM process. Stahl *et al.* (2012:29) support this notion, emphasising that effective TM requires LMs to be accountable for recruiting and developing employees' skills and knowledge. LMs tend to prioritise tasks directly linked to their accountability and rewards, while neglecting unrewarded HRM activities (Whittaker and Marchington 2003:258). This suggests that if LMs are held accountable for HRM tasks, they would be more inclined to carry them out. To achieve this accountability, it is essential to connect HRM tasks to LMs' job descriptions and performance agreements, enabling evaluation and fostering their willingness to take on HRM responsibilities and, consequently, increasing their involvement in TM (Nehles *et al.*, 2006:258).

### **2.5.2 TM stakeholders' support for the TM programme**

The support from various stakeholders (e.g. senior managers and TM professionals) plays a crucial role in facilitating the involvement of LMs in TM (Mansor *et al.*, 2011:2350; Trullen *et al.*, 2016:449; Tafti *et al.*, 2017). This is evidenced by Mansor *et al.* (2011:2350), whose study found that senior management support was a significant factor enabling LMs to participate in talent development in higher education in Europe. Similarly, Trullen *et al.* (2016:449) discovered that HR support was instrumental in involving LMs effectively in HRM. The type of support provided to LMs in this context can be categorised into two main areas. First, there was training support, which involved training LMs on how to perform HRM tasks. This training equipped LMs with the necessary knowledge and skills to perform HRM work effectively, thereby facilitating their involvement (Conway and Monks 2010:371; Khan 2011:73; Mansor *et al.*, 2011:2350; Trullen *et al.*, 2016:449; Blayney *et al.*, 2019). Second, administrative and technical support provided by

human resource department experts was also important (Whittaker and Marchington, 2003; Conway and Monks 2010:10; Gollan *et al.*, 2015; McDermott *et al.*, 2015; Trullen *et al.*, 2016: 456; Blayney *et al.*, 2019). This included materials such as manuals and toolkits that LMs were able to refer to when implementing HRM practices, as well as sufficient human resource department staff, policies and procedures to guide with people management issues (Trullen *et al.* 2016:456; Blayney *et al.*, 2019:5). Overall, both forms of support are essential in enabling LMs' involvement in TM.

### **2.5.3 TM stakeholders' disposition towards TM.**

The literature asserts that LMs' positive perceptions of HRM facilitated the involvement of LMs in TM (Whittaker and Marchington 2003; Kuvaas *et al.*, 2014:861; McDermott 2015). For instance, Kuvaas *et al.* (2014:861) concluded that when LMs perceive HRM practices as enablers for their managerial roles, it motivates them to engage in HRM. Similarly, Ogilvy and Ellam-Dyson (2012:46) found that LMs who viewed coaching as a developmental tool for employees were more likely to participate in coaching practices. Likewise, Trullen *et al.* (2016:463) found that LMs' motivation to perform human resource planning contributed to their involvement in HRM tasks. Other studies also align with these findings (Cunningham and Hyman 1995:12; Renwick 2003:267; Nehles *et al.*, 2006:263; Watson *et al.*, 2007:17; Brandl *et al.*, 2009:194; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010:365). LMs expressed enjoyment in performing HRM tasks and they liked taking a leading role in executing HRM activities (Renwick 2003:267). Similarly, Watson *et al.* (2007:17) found that LMs had a sense of ownership of HRM practices such as training, recruitment and others. Likewise, Nehles *et al.* (2006:263) found that 30 LMs were willing to carry out their HRM tasks. In summary, the positive perceptions LMs have of HRM practices motivate and facilitate their active involvement in various HRM tasks and functions, making them more involved in TM.

#### **2.5.4 Analysis of the literature results on barriers and enablers for LMs' involvement in TM**

To that end, the above sections 2.4 and 2.5 unearthed various factors that inhibited LMs' involvement in TM. These factors included: lack of interest from LMs in TM; LMs' multiple roles and increased workload; lack of organisational support for TM programme; resource constraints; and lack of empowerment of LMs in TM. As a result of these factors, there was a noticeable inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. On the other hand, these sections also revealed several factors that facilitated LMs' involvement in TM encompassing making LMs accountable for TM; TM stakeholders' support towards TM; and TM stakeholders' disposition towards TM. By considering these facilitative factors, the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM was reduced.

Overall, these studies shed light on the barriers to LMs' involvement in TM and the resulting inconsistency. However, they do not offer a comprehensive view of the phenomenon, due to various reasons. First, the studies relevant to barriers to TM implementation do not delve into their impact on LMs' involvement in TM. Second, few studies that uncovered barriers to LMs' involvement in TM were focused on investigating something else other than barriers to LMs' involvement in TM (e.g. Adebola 2017; Gadsden *et al.*, 2017; Amushila and Bussin 2021). Third, many studies of barriers to LMs' involvement in HRM focused predominantly on internal factors (e.g. Teague and Roche 2012; Evans 2015). Although it can be argued that the existing studies focused more on internal factors than on external factors because LMs, as internal stakeholders, are the protagonists in the issue and tend to attract more attention (e.g. Wright and Nishii 2013; Makhecha *et al.*, 2018), nevertheless, a similar attention would have been paid to external factors to gain a full and balanced understanding of the phenomenon. This is based on the fact that LMs are not islands, as their roles in TM could be affected by external factors as well (Thunnissen and Buttiens, 2017). Third, most studies were undertaken from the perspective of HRM, which is mostly based on egalitarian principles and not an exclusivity doctrine. Finally, many studies were conducted in Western and Asian countries, which differ contextually from the CSO. It is against this background that Kravariti *et al.* (2022:19) called for more qualitative studies that provide an in-depth look at a variety of issues faced by LMs when implementing TM in the public sector in a rapidly evolving context.

In view of the above, Table 2 below provides a summary of the results on barriers and enablers for LMs involvement in TM.

**Table 2: A summary of barriers and enablers for LMs' involvement in TM**

Barriers and enablers of LMs' involvement in TM	Description of the barriers and enablers for LMs' involvement in TM	Name of the authors
Barriers for LMs involvement in TM	Lack of interest from LMs in TM	D'Annunzio-Green 2018; Silzer and Dowell 2010:69; Adebola 2017; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010:365; Šiugždinienė 2008:35; Ngugi 2016; Cunningham and Hyman 1995:12.
	LMs multiple roles and increased workload	Evans 2017:3139; Mansor <i>et al.</i> , 2011:2350; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; Watson <i>et al.</i> , 2007; Khan 2011:57; Harris <i>et al.</i> , 2002; Gilbert <i>et al.</i> , 2011; Evans 2015.
	Lack of organisation support for LMs	Knies <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Blayney <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Evans 2015; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; Watson <i>et al.</i> , 2007; Whittaker and Marchington 2003; Hutchinson and Purcell 2003:3; Larsen and Brewster, 2003; McDermott, <i>et al.</i> , 2015; Cunningham 2017; Teague and Roche 2012
	Resource constraints	Blayney <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Evans 2015; Adebola 2017; Hutchison and Purcell 2010; Hutchinson and Purcell 2008:55; Harris and Foster 2010; D'Annunzio-Green and Ramdhony 2019.
	Lack of empowerment of LMs in TM	Cascon-Pereira <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014.
Enablers for LMs' involvement in TM	Making LMs accountable for TM	Stahl <i>et al.</i> , 2012:29; Whittaker and Marchington 2003:258; Nehles <i>et al.</i> , 2006:258.
	TM stakeholders' support for the TM programme	Mansor <i>et al.</i> , 2011:2350; Trullen <i>et al.</i> , 2016:449; Tafti <i>et al.</i> , 2017.
	TM stakeholders' disposition	Kuvaas <i>et al.</i> , 2014:861; Mc Dermott 2015; Whittaker and Marchington 2003.

Compiled by the author.

## **2.6 Overall summary of analysis of literature review results and identified research gap on LMs' involvement in TM.**

To that end, the chapter established that TM discipline is replete with varied definitions of both “talent” and TM. Nonetheless, the varied definitions converge on the notion of managing an employee’s attributes, to contribute to the fulfilment of the organisation’s mission. Consistent with varied talent and TM definitions, different perspectives of managing talent were identified, including inclusive TM also known as practices perspective; talent pool; elite key employees’ perspective; exclusive key positions; and hybrid TM perspectives. The variations in the definitions of talent and TM can be attributed to factors such as TM debates; the specific context in which TM is implemented; HRM practices used to operationalise TM strategy; and the roles played by key stakeholders in the implementation process. However, to successfully implement TM, the organisation should inculcate a talent mindset culture that among other things, calls for the involvement of LMs in TM implementation. LMs are critical stakeholders whose involvement is crucial for the success of TM implementation (Cooke *et al.*, 2014:226; Blanco *et al.*, 2021). Yet, only very limited empirical research has examined the way in which LMs are involved in TM.

With the limited TM literature reviewed, anecdotal evidence indicates that LMs were involved in several TM practices, including talent acquisition and identification, talent development, performance management, TM budget and TM expertise acquisition. Yet, in terms of the level of involvement of LMs in TM practices, the review shows mixed results. While some studies suggested that LMs made TM decisions alone, others indicated that LMs shared responsibility for TM decision-making with human resource professionals, with LMs bearing primary responsibility for the decision. In terms of depth, this means that LMs were heavily involved in TM, as they alone made decisions or had the final say in the decision-making process (Budhwar 2000; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). In contrast, other studies revealed that LMs shared responsibility for TM decision-making with human resource professionals, but the latter had primary responsibility for the decision. This was manifested either in LMs being consulted when human resource professionals made decisions or required to make proposals for TM decisions. In terms of depth, this suggests that LMs were moderately involved in TM as their involvement was limited to being consulted when decisions were made or making a proposal for TM decisions (Budhwar 2000; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira

and Valverde 2014). Some studies found that LMs were involved in operational tasks of several TM practices. In terms of coverage, this means that LMs were more involved, as their involvement included multiple operational tasks across multiple TM practices (Budhwar 2000; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Other studies found that LMs were left out of TM practices entirely. In terms of coverage and depth, this means that LMs were less involved in TM, as they had nothing to do with it. Finally, some studies found that LMs underwent TM training. Yet, opinions on the level of adequacy of the training were mixed, with some training being considered adequate and others not. As a result, LMs were more involved in acquiring TM expertise in TM training that was rated “adequate” and less when it was rated “inadequate”.

The literature results also indicate that the involvement of LMs in TM did not go smoothly, as there were several barriers that impeded LMs’ involvement in TM, resulting in an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement. The barriers uncovered were categorised as: (1) delegation issues (e.g. lack of LMs interest in TM, LMs’ multiple roles and increased workloads); (2) alignment issues (e.g. resource constraints, lack of organisational support for the TM programme and lack of empowerment), and monitoring issues. In contrast, some studies unearthed several enablers (e.g. LMs’ accountability for TM; TM stakeholders’ support for TM; TM stakeholders’ disposition towards TM) that facilitated the involvement of LMs in TM, to the extent that they reduced the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM.

Implicitly, if one maps the results of the literature review exercise on the continuum where, at one end, LMs own decision-making and, at the other, LMs do not, and the middle has shared responsibility, one would be tempted to extrapolate that the involvement of LMs across TM practices lagged in as far as owning decision-making in TM practices is concerned. This is because very few studies found that TM decisions were made solely by LMs, or that LMs had primary responsibility on decision-making responsibility when they shared decision-making responsibility with human resource department professionals. Most studies found that LMs were involved in operational TM tasks. Furthermore, the involvement of LMs was precluded by delegation, alignment, and monitoring factors to the extent that they contributed to the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement in TM. Yet, such a conclusion would be impulsive and controversial, as it assumes an incomplete study of the overall phenomenon. The argument is based on the following reasons.

First, the results mainly stem from studies that focused solely on HRM, which was guided by egalitarian principles, rather than TM, which is mainly guided by the doctrine of exclusivity. Accordingly, it is not known to what extent LMs are involved in which TM philosophy, as there are five different TM philosophies from which an organisation can choose.

Second, most of the relevant TM studies focused on single TM practices, making it difficult to assess whether their level of involvement might be the same across all TM practices or might vary from one practice to another.

Third, most of the relevant studies do not provide an in-depth understanding of LMs' involvement in TM (e.g. Hirsh 2015; Fitzgerald 2016).

Fourth, most of the relevant studies that uncovered barriers to LMs' involvement in TM were focused on other issues (e.g. Adebola, 2017; Gadsden *et al.*, 2017; Amushila and Bussin, 2021; Golik *et al.*, 2018).

Fifth, most of the studies of barriers to LMs' involvement in HRM paid more attention to internal factors (e.g. Teague and Roche 2012; Evans 2015). Although it can be argued that the existing studies focused more on internal factors than on external factors because LMs, as internal stakeholders, are the protagonists of the issue and tend to attract more attention (e.g. Wright and Nishii 2013; Makhecha *et al.*, 2018), nevertheless, a similar attention would have been paid to external factors to gain a full and balanced understanding of the phenomenon. This is based on the fact that LMs are not islands, as their roles in TM could be affected by external factors as well (Thunnissen and Buttiens, 2017).

Sixth, most TM studies are conceptual (Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013:1745). Additionally, most studies were conducted in the USA, Europe, Asia and the Middle East, and focused on private and multinational organisations, with very few in Africa and the banking sector (Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013a:1745; Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen 2016:40; Anlesinya *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, TM research lags in offering TM solutions to organisations, especially in varying national and industrial contexts (Thunnissen, 2016:57; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020).



In line with the above observations, and aware that TM is not a “one-size-fits-all” issue, scholars called for more empirically contextualised research focused specifically on the involvement of LMs in TM in a state-owned organisation in underexplored contexts, such as Africa (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen, 2016; Anlesinya *et al.*, 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Kravariti *et al.*, 2022). In addition, Kravariti *et al.* (2022:19) called for a qualitative study that provides an in-depth insight into a variety of issues faced by LMs when implementing TM in the public sector in a rapidly evolving context. Thus, the study intends to fill the gap in question by examining the involvement of LMs in TM in a CSO.

## **2.7 Chapter Summary**

The chapter aimed to present the findings of a literature review on the involvement of LMs in TM, and to identify research gaps. It was divided into four sections. The first discussed the lack of a universal definition for talent and highlighted the various definitions of both talent and TM, along with diverse perspectives on TM; the implementation of TM is influenced by contextual factors. In the second section, it was found that LMs are involved in multiple TM practices, although their level of involvement varies. LMs are more involved in operational TM tasks rather than TM decision-making, driven by factors such as process effectiveness and cost reduction. The third section explored barriers (e.g. delegation and alignment issues) and facilitators (e.g. LMs’ accountability and stakeholder support) affecting LMs’ involvement in TM. These factors contribute to inconsistency between LMs’ prescribed and actual involvement. The final section analysed the overall literature review results, indicating a lack of complete understanding of the phenomenon due to a focus on HRM, with egalitarian principles, and limited research on TM, guided by exclusivity. Most studies were conceptual and conducted in different regions, which differ contextually from the CSO. Several scholars called for more empirical and contextual research focusing on the involvement of LMs in TM in a governmental setting in Africa.

However, the chapter did not provide a review result of frameworks for analysing LMs’ involvement in TM. Therefore, the subsequent chapter provides literature review results of the fragmented frameworks for analysing the varied dimensions of involvement.

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical Frameworks for Analysing the Involvement of LMs in TM**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the focus was on reviewing literature about the involvement of line managers (LM) in talent management (TM). However, this review did not address the frameworks used to analyse this involvement, which is a crucial aspect of the study. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the literature review regarding the frameworks utilised to analyse the various dimensions of involvement of LMs in TM. The findings reveal that involvement of LMs in HRM encompasses multiple dimensions, including both prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM. However, the frameworks used to analyse this involvement are fragmented. Each framework often concentrates on specific dimension, ignoring others, which creates challenges in analysing multiple dimensions within a single study. This chapter proceeds by presenting the literature review outcomes on prescribed and actual dimensions of LMs' involvement in HRM, emphasizing their impact on employee and organisational performance. Next, it discusses the results related to relevant frameworks used for analysing these dimensions. A comprehensive summary is then provided of the literature review analysis and a knowledge gap identified. The chapter concludes with a final summary.

### **3.2 Prescribed and Actual dimensions of involvement of LMs in HRM**

Academics and practitioners stress the significance of involving LMs in TM due to their positive impact on employee and organisational performance (Alfes *et al.*, 2013; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Kravariti *et al.*, 2022). Achieving organisational performance through the involvement of LMs thus requires effective involvement of them in TM (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Fitzgerald, 2016; Tyskbo 2020). However, this requirement is complex, because the concept of “involvement of LMs in HRM” encompasses various dimensions, including both prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM, making it an intricate process (e.g. Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Teague and Roche 2012; Wright and Nishii 2013; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Makhecha *et al.*, 2018; Tyskbo 2020).

The *prescribed* dimension of involvement of LMs in HRM is at two levels. The first addresses the HRM practices or tasks delegated to LMs for implementation (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Fu *et al.*, 2020). The second examines the extent or degree of LMs' involvement in HRM practices, answering the question of how involved LMs are in HRM (Makhecha *et al.*, 2018; Tyskbo 2020). The relevance of the prescribed dimension lies in its ability to distinguish between rhetorical and real involvement of LMs in HRM (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

On the other hand, the *actual* dimension of involvement of LMs in HRM focuses on the implementation of the prescribed involvement of LMs in HRM and explores why that involvement may not be realised as intended (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Khilji and Wang, 2006; Wright and Nishii, 2007; Sikora and Ferris, 2014; Gilbert *et al.*, 2015; Tyskbo 2020). The significance of the actual involvement of LMs in the HRM dimension lies in the fact that prescribed involvement of LMs in HRM may not always translate into actual involvement of LMs in HRM, unless LMs execute their prescribed involvement as intended (Fu *et al.*, 2020:204). Numerous external and internal forces can hinder the implementation of prescribed involvement of LMs in HRM, leading to inconsistencies between their prescribed and actual involvement in HRM (Gilbert *et al.*, 2011)

Accordingly, the complexity of meeting the requirement for effective involvement of LMs in HRM stems from the fact that decisions regarding their involvement in TM must rely on analysing both their prescribed and actual involvement (Nehles *et al.*, 2006; Teague and Roche 2012; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Makhecha *et al.*, 2018). While analysing the prescribed dimension of involvement provides insights on how to appropriately determine the level of involvement of LMs in TM (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018), analysing the actual dimension of involvement, nonetheless, helps identify problems that impede LMs from performing prescribed TM roles as intended, and ways to eliminate the problems (Teague and Roche 2012; Sumelius *et al.*, 2014; Evans 2015; Bayo-Mariones *et al.*, 2020). Collectively, they can ensure informed decisions to effectively involve LMs in TM, which in turn contributes to employee performance and ultimately organisational performance. Yet, there is a lack of a unified framework to analyse both dimensions, as existing ones are fragmented (e.g. Teague and Roche 2012; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Bos-Nehles 2010; Nik Mat 2014). This implies a that a holistic framework for analysing the prescribed

and actual involvement of LMs in HRM dimensions is critical to effective involvement of LMs in HRM.

The main question to consider is which frameworks are relevant in guiding the analysis of the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. Consequently, the following section presents the findings of the literature search on frameworks used to analyse this question.

### **3.3 Relevant frameworks for analysing the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM**

In the analysis of the prescribed and actual levels of LMs involvement in TM, it is evident that existing frameworks offer fragmented perspectives, each focusing either on the prescribed or the actual involvement of LMs in TM. Consequently, none of these frameworks adequately address both aspects of LMs' involvement in TM.

Concerning the prescribed level of LMs involvement in TM, several relevant frameworks exist, including: (1) Role theory (Melton, 1957; Lopopolo, 2002; Shiver-Blackwell, 2004); (2) Human Resource Business Partnership (HRBP) Model (Ulrich *et al.*, 2012); (3) Cascon-Pereira and Valverde's (2014) Four-dimensional framework (FDF); (4) Managerial Roles model (Mintzberg, 1973); and (5) Bratton and Ghold Adapted Model (Bratton and Ghold, 2017). While all of these frameworks have the potential to analyse the prescribed level of LMs' involvement in TM, the study prioritises FDF. Unlike other theories and frameworks which primarily focus on analysing the role of LMs in TM, FDF offers the unique ability to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the extent of LMs' involvement in TM. This capacity aligns closely with the study's objective of gaining an in-depth understanding of the extent of LMs' involvement in TM within the CSO. This distinctive capability stems from the framework's integration of foundational theories developed by eminent scholars, aimed at elucidating the extent of LMs' involvement in HRM (Kinnie 1990; Brewster and Larsen 1992; McConville and Holden 1999; Budhwar 2000a; Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006).

Regarding the actual level of LMs' involvement in TM, numerous frameworks exist to analyse the actual LMs' involvement in TM, categorised into two main groups. The first group encompasses frameworks that analyse actual LMs' involvement in TM at an internal level, such as Nehles *et al.*'s (2006) Five-dimensional framework, Boxall and Purcell's (2011) Ability-Motivation-Opportunity Model, Teague and Roche's (2012) Three-

dimensional framework (TDF), and Kurdi-Nakra *et al.'s* (2022) Four-dimensional framework. The second group consists of frameworks that analyse actual LMs' involvement in TM at an external level, including institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), stakeholder theory (Freeman *et al.*, 2010), and Resource Dependency Theory (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003).

Although all the frameworks in the first group have the potential to analyse the actual LMs' involvement in TM, the study prioritises TDF due to its alignment with the study's objective. Unlike other frameworks, TDF provides a more comprehensive analysis of the actual involvement of LMs in TM, particularly at the internal level. It builds upon earlier models and covers a wide range of dimensions, reflecting a broader analysis of the actual involvement of LMs in HRM, as advocated by prominent scholars (McGovern *et al.*, 1997; Nehles *et al.*, 2006; CIPD 2007; CIPD 2008; Boxall and Purcell 2011). This comprehensive approach aligns well with the study's aim of exploring various factors affecting LMs' involvement in TM. Concerning the second group, the study gave preference to institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) because of its ability to offer precise explanations for why organisations fail or implement HRM programmes, with a focus on institutional influences. This attribute is particularly relevant to the context of CSO as it is characterised by low leadership independence and affected by factors like the COVID-19 pandemic among other things.

Apart from the individual justifications for favouring each framework over others in their respective areas of analysing LMs' involvement in TM, it's important to emphasise that the primary reason for prioritising the combination of these three frameworks (e.g. FDF, TDF and institutional isomorphism) is their ability to analyse both the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. The three frameworks have the potential to complement each other, which facilitates a comprehensive analysis of prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM within a single study. This is based on the observation that the strengths of each framework can address the weaknesses of the others, and vice versa. For instance, the FDF excels in analysing the prescribed involvement of LMs in the HRM dimension, which is a limitation of both the TDF and institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Teague and Roche 2012). Conversely, the TDF's strength lies in assessing the internal aspects of the actual involvement dimension, a limitation for both the FDF and institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Lastly, institutional isomorphism (*ibid.*)

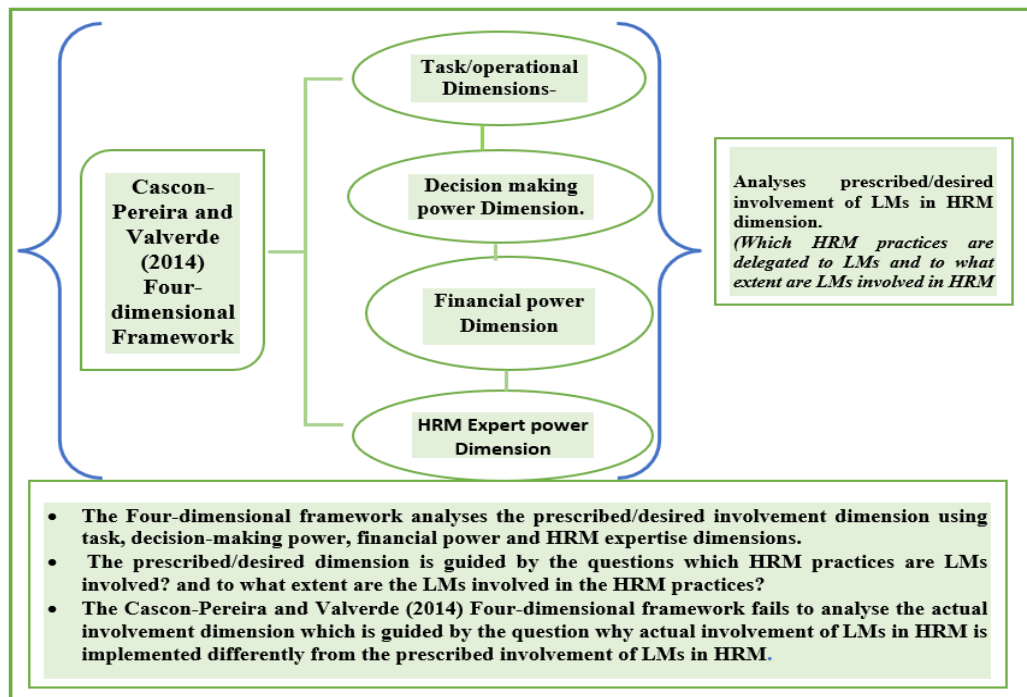
demonstrates strength in analysing the external aspects of the actual involvement of LMs in TM, effectively addressing the limitations of both FDF and TDF.

Drawing from the preceding discussions, the analysis of LMs' involvement in TM at both prescribed and actual levels within the CSOs was guided by three frameworks: Cascon-Pereira and Valverde's (2014) Four-dimensional framework, Teague and Roche's (2012) Three-dimensional framework, and institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Subsequent sections will delve into detailed discussions of these frameworks.

### **3.3.1 Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) Four-dimensional framework (FDF)**

The first relevant framework for analysing the involvement of LMs in TM is the FDF. Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014), building on the previous guidance and insights of some scholars (Kinnie 1990; Brewster and Larsen 1992; McConville and Holden 1999; Budhwar 2000a; Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006), developed a FDF for analysing the extent of LMs' involvement in HRM. The FDF – unsurprisingly – consists of four dimensions: (1) task responsibility; (2) decision-making power; (3) financial power; and (4) expert power/knowledge. According to the FDF, for LMs to realistically be involved in HRM, their involvement in HRM tasks must be accompanied by decision-making authority, financial authority and HRM expertise; otherwise, their involvement becomes burdensome (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). The overall extent of LMs' involvement in HRM is determined by their combined involvement across these four dimensions. When LMs have high involvement in HRM operational tasks coupled with high decision-making power, financial power and expert power, they are considered highly involved in HRM (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Figure 5 below presents a pictorial representation of FDF.

**Figure 5: Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) Four-dimensional framework (FDF)**



Compiled by the author.

However, the general question would be what guidance the framework provides for determining the level of LMs' involvement in the four dimensions. Therefore, the subsequent sections explain this.

### 3.3.1.1 Task responsibility dimension.

The work of Budhwar and Sparrow (1997) influenced the development of the task dimension (Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; Budhwar 2000a; Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira et al., 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Budhwar and Sparrow (1997), building on the work of Brewster and Larsen (1992), identified a change in the HRM tasks assigned to LMs as a determining factor in their level of involvement in operational HRM tasks. This dimension aims to determine whether LMs' HRM responsibilities have increased, remained the same or decreased over a specific period. Implicitly, increased HRM responsibilities assigned to LMs indicate higher involvement in HRM, compared to those whose responsibilities have remained the same or decreased. Furthermore, LMs who perform HRM tasks across multiple HRM practices are considered more involved than LMs whose HRM responsibilities remained the same or even decreased (Budhwar and Sparrow 1997:481). Accordingly, the dimension was incorporated into the FDF (Cascon-Pereira *et*

*al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Several studies demonstrate the relevance of this dimension in analysing the involvement of LMs in HRM (Brewster and Larsen 1992; Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; Hall and Torrington 1998; Budhwar 2000b; Maxwell and Watson 2006; Gautam and Davis 2007; Conway and Monks 2010; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Fu *et al.*, 2017; Bondarouk *et al.*, 2018).

### **3.3.1.2 Decision-making power dimension.**

The work of Brewster and Larsen (1992), as well as Kinnie (1990), significantly influenced the development of the dimension (Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; Budhwar 2000b; Budhwar 2000a; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Brewster and Larsen (1992) aimed to investigate the level of involvement and developed a framework with two key elements: (1) the extent to which LMs are involved in HRM practices; and (2) the ratio of HRM specialists to the total number of employees. In relation to the first element, the researchers developed a framework consisting of four scales that address the question of who holds primary responsibility for decision-making in HRM, as between LMs and HRM specialists. These scales were: (1) sole decision-making by LMs, indicating that LMs have exclusive responsibility for decision-making on HRM issues; (2) LMs in consultation with HRM specialists, suggesting that LMs share responsibility with HRM specialists, but LMs hold primary decision-making responsibility; (3) HRM in consultation with LMs, meaning that HRM specialists share responsibility with LMs, but HRM specialists have primary decision-making responsibility; and (4) sole HRM decision, indicating that HRM specialists bear sole responsibility for decision-making in HRM areas. Essentially, high involvement or direct involvement implies that LMs have primary decision-making responsibility in HRM practices (Budhwar 2000a; Budhwar 2000b). Moreover, LMs' consultation or partial involvement in decision-making, such as proposing decisions, suggests a moderate level of involvement in terms of depth (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018). Consequently, this dimension was included in the FDF (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Several studies demonstrate the relevance of this dimension in analysing the involvement of LMs in HRM (Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; Hall and Torrington 1998; Budhwar 2000b; Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005; Valverde *et al.*, 2006; Gautam and Davis 2007; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018). However, indicative scale 2, which considers the number of HRM specialists in relation to the total number of employees, was not included in the framework, due to its



quantitative nature, which does not align well with the subjective nature of the term “involvement” (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Bondarouk *et al.*, 2018).

### **3.3.1.3 Financial power**

The development of the dimension was influenced by the work of Colling and Ferner (1992), as well as McConville and Holden (1999). This dimension specifically examines the level of involvement of LMs in the financial aspects of HRM, including their authority in decision-making and their role in overseeing budget implementation (Hales 2005). The financial dimension is premised on the understanding that involving LMs in HRM finances allows them a realistic and practical involvement in HRM tasks (McConville and Holden 1999; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006:136; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015). High involvement of LMs in the dimension is reflected in LMs having primary decision-making responsibility for determining budget allocation and usage and overseeing budget implementation (Kinnie 1990; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). The dimension, therefore, was included in the FDF. Several studies relevant to involvement of LMs in HRM exhibited characteristics of the dimension’s use (McConville and Holden 1999; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006:136; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Bondarouk *et al.*, 2018).

### **3.3.1.4 HRM expert power dimension**

The work of Budhwar and Sparrow (1997) influenced the development of this dimension (Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; Budhwar 2000a; Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Budhwar and Sparrow (1997), building on the work of Brewster and Larsen (1992), identified the percentage of LMs trained in HRM as a crucial factor determining their level of involvement in HRM expertise. This determinant is based on the proportion of LMs who have received HRM training and its adequacy in enabling LMs to perform HRM roles effectively. When a high percentage of LMs are trained in HRM, their involvement in HRM expertise is considered high. Conversely, a lower percentage of LMs undergoing HRM training results implies low involvement. Similarly, if the training provided to LMs is insufficient or ineffective, their involvement in HRM expertise is considered low. This dimension was included in the FDF (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Several studies examining the involvement of LMs in HRM exhibited characteristics of the dimension’s

use (Budhwar 2000b; Gautam and Davis 2007; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015; Bondarouk *et al.*, 2018).

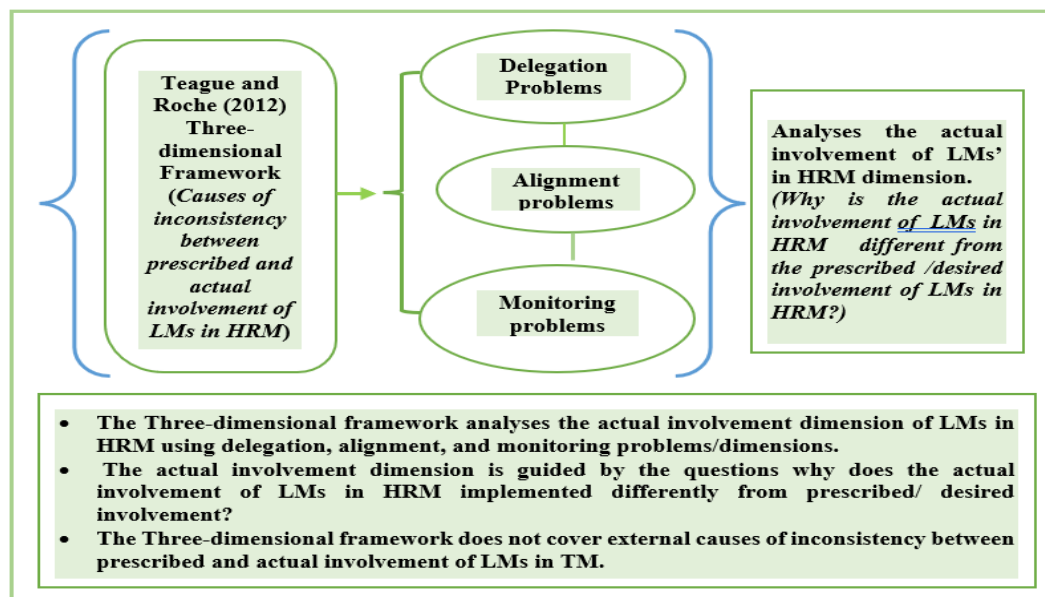
The FDF is effective in providing realistic, comprehensive and in-depth analysis of how LMs are involved in HRM. It achieves this by utilising specific dimensions, such as task, decision-making, TM budget and HRM expertise, to gain a thorough understanding of LMs' involvement in TM. The framework not only identifies the HRM practices in which LMs are involved, but also assesses the extent of their involvement in those practices (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). This aligns well with the objectives of the thesis, which seeks to gain a realistic, comprehensive and in-depth understanding of LMs' involvement in TM within the CSO. Therefore, the framework shows promise in this regard.

However, the FDF has a limitation in evaluating the actual involvement of LMs in the HRM dimension (e.g. Conway and Monks 2010; Teague and Roche 2012). It does not answer questions about how the prescribed involvement of LMs in HRM translates into their actual involvement, or why there might be a discrepancy between the prescribed and actual involvement, of LMs in HRM (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004; Khilji and Wang, 2006; Wright and Nishii, 2007; Sikora and Ferris, 2014; Gilbert *et al.*, 2015; Tyskbo 2020). To address this gap, the subsequent section will focus on the TDF (another relevant framework) for analysing LMs' involvement in HRM.

### **3.3.2 Teague and Roche (2012) Three-dimensional framework (TDF)**

The second relevant framework for analysing the involvement of LMs in TM is the TDF. Teague and Roche (2012:236) conducted an analysis of the work of various scholars (e.g. McGovern *et al.*, 1997; Nehles *et al.*, 2006; CIPD 2007; CIPD 2008; Boxall and Purcell 2011) and identified the internal bottlenecks that hinder the translation of desired, into actual involvement of LMs in HRM. These bottlenecks were developed into a TDF consisting of three dimensions: (1) delegation problems; (2) alignment problems; and (3) monitoring problems. The TDF asserts that these internal problems serve as inhibiting forces for LMs' involvement in HRM, resulting in an inconsistency between their prescribed and their actual involvement. Figure 6 below provides pictorial representation of the TDF.

**Figure 6: Teague and Roche (2012) Three-dimensional framework**



Compiled by the author.

However, the general question would be what guidance TDF provides for analysing the actual involvement of LMs in HRM. The following sections will present an explanation of this matter.

### 3.3.2.1 Delegation problems

Delegation problems can arise in different forms, including differences in opinions between LMs and other HRM stakeholders (e.g. senior management and HRM specialist on delegated HRM work. These varying perspectives cause LMs to partially or completely neglect HRM tasks, leading to a disconnect between the expected and actual involvement of LMs in HRM (Maxwell and Watson 2006; Brandl *et al*, 2009; Teague and Roche 2012; Evans 2015). The differing viewpoints of TM stakeholders towards TM may become apparent when LMs interpret TM tasks assigned to them as tasks meant for TM specialists (Gadsden *et al.*, 2017:22).

Secondly, delegation issues arise when LMs engage in self-serving behaviour by prioritising actions that benefit themselves and avoiding uncomfortable situations related to executing HRM, for example, refusing to appraise staff performance for fear of the reactions of the appraised staff (Sikora and Ferris 2014). This behaviour creates a discrepancy between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM (e.g. Teague and Roche 2012; Sikora and Ferris 2014).

Thirdly, delegation issues arise due to LMs' lack of time and motivation to perform HRM work, resulting in a negative impact on HRM tasks. This lack of motivation and time leads to inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM (e.g. McGovern *et al.*, 1997; Whittaker and Marchington 2003; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; Teague and Roche 2012). Motivation, as defined by Rossett (2009:59), refers to an individual's persistence and concern for their work, and affects their effort and performance. When individuals are less motivated, they invest less effort into their work, leading to a discrepancy between prescribed and actual performance. Furthermore, interest is another aspect of motivation. When individuals are not interested in their work, their performance tends to fluctuate (Avila 2011:32), resulting in a mismatch between desired and actual performance.

Traits of the delegation dimension (e.g. poor communication between those who formulate HRM policies and those who execute them; LMs' work overload; LMs' role conflict; time pressures; LMs' self-serving behaviours; LMs' lack of motivation; LMs' lack of willingness to perform HRM work) leading to an inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM/TM were noted in several studies relevant to barriers to LMs' involvement in HRM (McGovern *et al.*, 1997; Nehles *et al.*, 2006; Purcell and Hutchinson 2007; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; Bos-Nehles 2010; Boxall and Purcell 2011; Gilbert *et al.*, 2011; Teague and Roche 2012; Bos-Nehles *et al.*, 2013; Sikora and Ferris 2014; Evans 2017; Makhecha *et al.*, 2018; Kurdi-Nakra *et al.*, 2022:246).

### **3.3.2.2 Alignment problems**

The issue of alignment arises when there is insufficient organisational support provided to LMs in carrying out HRM tasks, resulting in a mismatch between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM (Teague and Roche 2012; Evans 2015; Bos-Nehles *et al.*, 2020:737). First, the lack of organisational support is evident in the absence of HRM training for LMs, leading to a deficiency in their knowledge and skills. Consequently, LMs are unable to perform HRM according to the prescribed guidelines, leading to a discrepancy between the prescribed and actual involvement in HRM (Gilbert 1978; Mager and Pipe 1984; Rummler 1987; Rummler and Brache 1990; Rosett 2009; Nehles *et al* 2006; Boxall and Purcell 2011; Teague and Roche 2012; Evans 2015).

Second, the absence of adequate organisational support is evident in the centralisation of HRM and the rise of bureaucratic procedures, leading to the implementation of restrictive policies, among other factors. These aspects impede the involvement of LMs in TM, creating a disparity between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM activities (Rossett 2009; Conway and Monks 2010:370).

Third, the absence of training and organisational support reflects absence of incentives for LMs to engage in HRM, causing them to avoid TM tasks, creating an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in HRM (e.g. Teague and Roche 2012; Evans 2015). Incentives play a crucial role in recognising employees' performance and can be in the form of both non-financial, such as training opportunities, and financial rewards (Gilbert 1978; Gupta *et al.*, 2007; Rossett 2009). The argument for providing incentives is based on the observation that when individuals feel their performance is undervalued or inadequately recognised, they are likely to invest less effort in their work, resulting in lower performance (Rossett 2009). Moreover, in line with Rossett (2009), this lack of support refers to the absence of necessary tools which can extend to resource constraints that hinder performers from carrying out their work as prescribed, creating a mismatch between the prescribed and actual performance. Upon closer examination of the revealed insights within this dimension, a similarity emerges with the human resource factors identified by Kurdi-Nakra *et al.* (2022:246), that determine the involvement of LMs in HRM. These factors include: (1) capacity; (2) HR-related competence; (3) support; and (4) human resource policy.

Characteristics of this dimension (e.g. alignment problems such as resource constraints, LMs' lack of knowledge to undertake HRM tasks, insufficient LM-TM training, among others) that led to an inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM/TM were noted in several relevant studies (Renwick, 2003; McConville, 2006; Maxwell and Watson, 2006; Purcell and Hutchinson, 2007; Hutchinson and Purcell, 2010; Bos-Nehles 2010; Biron *et al.*, 2011; Teague and Roche 2012; Sumelius *et al.*, 2014; Evans 2015; Bayo-Mariones *et al.*, 2020).

### 3.3.2.3 Monitoring problems

The monitoring problems stem from a lack of monitoring or evaluation of LMs who perform HRM roles, resulting in a discrepancy between what is expected and their actual involvement in HRM (Teague and Roche 2012; Evans 2015). Lack of or insufficient monitoring can lead to a lack of accountability in HRM for LMs, causing HRM work to suffer, as it is not connected to performance evaluation (as it should be in relation to their core responsibilities) (Whittaker and Marchington 2003). As a result, LMs do not engage effectively in HRM tasks, since there are no repercussions for not completing the work. This creates a discrepancy between the expected and actual participation of LMs in HRM. Traits of the dimension were noted in several related studies (McGovern *et al.*, 1997; Whittaker and Marchington 2003; Bos-Nehles 2010; Teague and Roche 2012).

Although the work of Evans (2015) suggests an additional aspect, such as inherent tensions in LMs, to the Three-dimensional Framework (TDF), this proposed dimension is similar to its existing delegation aspect. This is because the suggested dimension, which involves a high level of responsibility for LMs in HRM and their manipulation of desired HRM outcomes (Evans 2015), relates to the workload of LMs covered in the delegation dimension, resulting in an inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM (e.g. Teague and Roche 2012).

The strength of the TDF lies in its capacity to offer guidance for analysing the actual involvement of LMs in the HRM. By incorporating specific dimensions, such as delegation, alignment and monitoring, the framework offers a comprehensive and extensive approach to examining internal factors that hinder LMs from fulfilling their designated HRM responsibilities. As a result, the framework empowers organisations to explain why actual involvement of LMs in TM is not implemented as intended. The framework's strengths align well with the nature of the thesis, which seeks to gain a deep understanding of LMs' involvement in TM in the CSO from the perspective of varied internal bottlenecks that impede LMs from performing their prescribed TM roles. This understanding is based on the recognition that the CSO may encounter internal forces that impede LMs' involvement in TM. Thus, the framework holds promise for addressing this issue.

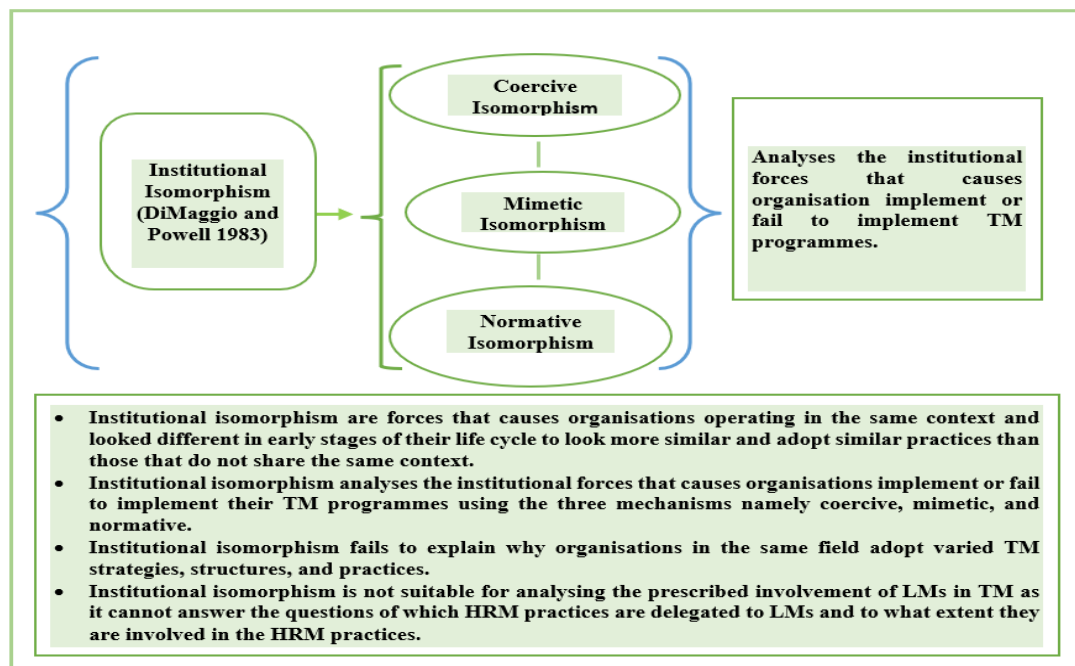
Nevertheless, the TDF has certain limitations. Primarily, it is unsuitable for analysing the prescribed involvement of LMs in the HRM dimension, as it cannot answer the question regarding the HRM practices that are assigned to LMs and the degree to which they are involved in those practices (Brewster and Larsen 1992; Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; Hall and Torrington 1998; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

The second limitation of the TDF is its exclusive focus on internal forces, leading to a disconnect between the intended and actual involvement of LMs in TM. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that external forces, including political, legal and social factors, can also contribute to this inconsistency. Scholars have found evidence supporting this claim, noting that LMs must adhere to external factors such as employment laws and human rights while carrying out HRM/TM responsibilities (Harris *et al.*, 2002; Khan 2011; Glaister *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, external factors like the level of political control may impact on the extent of LMs' involvement in HRM matters (Harris *et al.* 2002:220). Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected TM implementation (Bartik *et al.*, 2020; Haak-Saheem 2020:300; Aguinis and Burgi-Tian 2021:234).

### **3.3.3 Institutional Isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983)**

The final relevant concept is Institutional Isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), which is reviewed in detail in Chapter 2; Section 2.2.6. Figure 7 below provides a pictorial representation of the concept.

**Figure 7: DiMaggio and Powell (1983) Institutional Isomorphism**



**Compiled by the author.**

The strength of institutional isomorphism lies in its ability to provide valuable insights into the impact of external institutional forces on the implementation of HRM (Jackson and Schuler 1995:248). It helps us understand why organisations choose either to adopt or refrain from TM programmes (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Sidani and Al Ariss 2014). Upon closer examination, it becomes clear that institutional isomorphism aligns well with the aim of this thesis, which is to comprehensively understand the involvement of LMs in TM within a CSO, taking into account external barriers that hinder their involvement in TM. This alignment is based on the specific characteristics of the CSO and the context in which it operates (*vide* Chapter 1, Section 1.6). Considering the nature of the CSO and its operating environment, it can be inferred that the CSO relies on the government and may be influenced by coercive isomorphism, which can impact the implementation of TM from the perspective of LMs. Additionally, the CSO has been adversely affected by the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, potentially making it susceptible to mimetic isomorphism, which can influence the implementation of TM.



However, when it comes to analysing the prescribed involvement of LMs in TM, institutional isomorphism falls short, because it does not address specific questions about the HRM practices assigned to LMs and the extent of their involvement in those practices (e.g. Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Additionally, institutional isomorphism is constrained by external influences that aim to create uniformity in an organisation's processes and structures (Zsidisin et al., 2005:3411). Moreover, it has been discredited, because it fails to explain why organisations operating in the same industry adopt diverse TM strategies, structures and practices (Thornton and Ocasio 2008:101; Thunnissen and Buttiens 2017:395).

### **3.4. Overall summary of the analysis of results of literature review on frameworks for analysing the involvement of LMs in TM**

The literature reveals that the effective involvement of LMs in TM is critical due to its impact on employee performance and, ultimately, organisational performance. Decisions on how to involve LMs in TM effectively depend on analysing their involvement in both the prescribed and actual dimensions of TM. Analysing the prescribed dimension of involvement provides insights into determining the appropriate level of LM involvement; while analysing the actual dimension of involvement helps identify obstacles that hinder the fulfilment of prescribed TM roles and suggests ways to address them. By considering both dimensions, informed decisions can be made to involve LMs effectively in TM, leading to improved employee and overall organisational performance. However, the literature shows that the frameworks for analysing the involvement of LMs in TM are fragmented. In most cases, each framework is able to analyse a specific dimension of involvement but not every dimension, posing a challenge when it comes to analysing different dimensions in a single study. For example, the FDF is able to analyse the prescribed dimension of involvement. However, it fails to analyse the process or the actual involvement dimension. Conversely, the strength of TDF lies in its ability to analyse the actual involvement dimension. Yet, the framework is limited, as it cannot assess the prescribed dimension of involvement. Additionally, the framework does consider external factors. In contrast, institutional isomorphism is suitable for analysing a subset of the actual involvement dimension (i.e. the external). However, it is not suitable for analysing the prescribed dimension of involvement. Consequently, there is a gap between theory and practice within the TM domain. Unsurprisingly, scholars lamented that TM research lags in offering solutions to organisations, especially in unexplored national and industrial

contexts (Cappelli and Keller 2014; Thunnissen 2016:57; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020). Consistent with the observed gap, Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* (2015) reviewed TM studies; their findings revealed, among other things, dominant TM theories including institutionalism. To advance the TM theoretical stance, the authors called for more TM studies with the prevailing theories, and/or in conjunction with relevant theories, as a lens for analysing the phenomenon (*ibid.*).

Upon careful examination of these fragmented frameworks, along with considering the study's aim and contextual background, it becomes evident that there is potential for a unified framework. This unified framework may emerge by combining three distinct frameworks: FDF, TDF and institutional isomorphism. Together, these frameworks possess the capability to analyse both the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. The motivation for integration arises from their potential to complement each other, which facilitates a comprehensive analysis of prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM within a single study. The proposition for this unified framework is based on the observation that the strengths of each framework can address the weaknesses of the others, and vice versa. For instance, the FDF excels in analysing the prescribed involvement of LMs in the HRM dimension, which is a limitation of both the TDF and institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Teague and Roche 2012). Conversely, the TDF's strength lies in assessing the internal aspects of the actual involvement dimension, a limitation for both the FDF and institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Lastly, institutional isomorphism (*ibid.*) demonstrates strength in analysing the external aspects of the actual involvement of LMs in TM, effectively addressing the limitations of both FDF and TDF.

### **3.5 Chapter summary.**

The chapter presents the findings of a literature review regarding frameworks used to analyse different aspects of involvement. The results indicate that there are fragmented frameworks available for assessing various dimensions of involvement. Each framework typically focuses on a specific dimension, which poses a challenge when attempting to analyse multiple dimensions within a single study. This creates a gap between theory and practice in the TM domain.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide an overview of the current knowledge on LM involvement in TM. However, in order to generate new knowledge, the research design and methodology are essential. Therefore, the following chapter outlines the research design and methodology employed in this study.

## **Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The research design and methodology chapter play a crucial role in the project, similar to how strategic management is vital for organisations. Strategic management allows organisations to move from their current positions to their desired status (Thompson, *et al.*, 2007). Likewise, this chapter serves as a strategy or bridge for transitioning from existing knowledge, gained through the literature review, research aims and objectives in the previous chapters (e.g. knowledge on the involvement of LMs in TM in Western and Asian contexts), to new knowledge derived from empirical data within the CSO context. To simplify the complexity of the research design and methodological process, Saunders *et al.* (2016:124) likened it to peeling an onion, where each layer represents a stage in the research methodology process. The first section provides a concise overview of the CSO context. The second section presents the research aim, research questions, overview of the adopted methodological strategy and its justifications. Following the onion analogy, the third section outlines the research design, starting with the outer layer: research philosophy, which includes ontological and epistemological stances. It then progresses to: approaches for theory development; research type; research strategy; data collection methods (one-on-one semi-structured interviews and documentation analysis); data analysis; reflexivity; ethical considerations; research quality assessment; and conclusion.

### **4.2 The brief CSO context**

The CSO is a non-profit state bank, established by Act of Parliament, with the task of maintaining price and financial system stability in Malawi (RBM, 2019). It oversees the country's banking sector, but its leadership independence, despite being mandated by law, is one of the lowest in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) trading bloc. The CSO's leadership often faces premature termination of contracts when there are changes in government after general elections (Wessels 2009; Kamanga and Chikonda 2017). Similarly, Dzimbiri (2015:85) observed that, in Malawi, public sector positions have been influenced by successive governments since 1994, leading to improper procedures for appointing, promoting, transferring and dismissing high-ranking civil servants. The CSO operates in a culturally-collectivist country with a high power-distance culture and faces a considerable level of regulation, as evidenced by the labour laws. Furthermore, the CSO

operates amidst the challenges posed by the recent COVID-19 pandemic and in an environment where talent is scarce (Government of Malawi 2017; Dzimbiri and Molefakgotla 2021; Jamu 2017; Sulamoyo 2010). Finally, it is situated in one of the world's poorest nations (Government of Malawi 2017). The CSO acknowledges the importance of effectively managing employee talent to fulfil its mandate. To achieve this, they have a dedicated human resource department responsible for various HR matters, including talent acquisition, identification, development and performance management. The human resource department works in collaboration with stakeholders, such as senior management (SM), LMs, the Staff Representative Council (SRC) and others, to ensure consistent and systematic employee management. Furthermore, the CSO has established policies to guide HRM affairs. As of the data collection, the CSO employed a total of 719 individuals, comprising 469 males and 250 females.

### **4.3 Research aim, research questions, overview of the adopted methodological strategy and its justification**

The study aims to examine the way in which TM is implemented through the lens of LMs in the CSO. In particular, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- (a) To examine the way in which talent is understood and managed through the lens of TM philosophy.
- (b) To examine the way in which LMs are involved in TM.
- (c) To identify the contextual factors and the way in which they impede or facilitate LMs' involvement in TM.

Accordingly, the research seeks to answer the following research questions:

- (a) How is talent understood and managed through the lens of TM philosophy?
- (b) How are LMs involved in TM?
- (c) Which factors preclude or facilitate LMs' involvement in TM?

In alignment with the study's aim, study objectives and research questions, the study considered various methodological strategies, ultimately prioritising a methodological strategy centered around subjectivist ontology, interpretivism epistemology, inductive approach, qualitative research design, and embedded single case strategy for several reasons. Firstly, the study aimed to delve into the "how" and "why" of LMs' involvement in TM, better suited to case study research design rather than wide-ranging surveys.

Secondly, TM is a context-dependent discipline, as its implementation is influenced by its natural context to such an extent that a deep understanding of how the implementation process unfolds necessitates the adoption of a single case study to accommodate thorough examination of the phenomenon (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Cooke, 2018:11; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Cooke *et al.*, 2022). Based on this claim, Cooke (2018:11) and Cooke *et al.* (2022) emphasised the need for an increased number of qualitative studies that adopt a human-centred approach, focusing on in-depth single case studies. Thus, the adoption of the methodological approach in question is intended to respond to these calls. Thirdly, the unique nature of the CSO warranted an embedded single case study, as it differs significantly from profit-driven commercial banks as well as financial institutions. Adopting an embedded multiple case studies by involving CSO, commercial banks or financial institutions would not have been meaningful, practical and ethical as it would have been like comparing a mother to children (Saunders *et al* 2016:168). Fourthly, the inability to access commercial banks and financial institutions due to their fear of having their sensitive information accessed by outsiders coupled with closure of their offices during the COVID-19 pandemic further justified the adoption of a single case study design (Bryman and Bell 2011: 62; Saunders *et al*, 2016:168). This is because data collection was conducted in person using semi-structured interviews at the time when the COVID-19 pandemic was at its peak in Malawi. Overall, the chosen approach aimed to respond to calls for increased qualitative single case studies and to address the unique context of the CSO effectively. After presenting an overview of the methodological strategy employed in the study and its justifications, the following sections will concentrate on a detailed discussion of the specific strategy adopted and the rationale behind its selection.

#### **4.4 Philosophical assumptions**

Research philosophy pertains to the collection of beliefs and metaphysics that reflect the researcher's overall perspective (Stainton 2020:1). Two philosophical positions, ontology and epistemology, serve to elucidate the researcher's worldview (Saunders *et al.*, 2016:124; Adebola 2017:91). Ontology concerns the researchers' assumptions about the fundamental nature of reality (what is considered real) during the research process (Creswell and Clark 2018:73). In accordance with Zhang (2014:52), the study adopted a subjectivist ontology, which argues that there are multiple realities to a phenomenon, socially constructed by the actors within a prescribed context that is uncovered by seeking the actors' perspectives, using interviews (Bryman and Bell 2011:21-22; Creswell and

Clark 2018:73). Priority was given to the subjectivist ontology, as it aligned well with the nature of the study, which aimed to uncover reality regarding the way in which LMs were involved in TM in the context of the CSO (e.g. characterised by politics manifested in low leadership independence and affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, among other factors), using perspectives obtained by conducting interviews with key stakeholders at varied levels (e.g. LMs, SM, supervisors, officers, human resource department staff and SRC) directly involved in the implementation of TM (Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Zhang 2014).

Epistemology, on the other hand, refers to the “researcher’s view of what constitutes acceptable knowledge” (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:110,119). There are varied approaches to what constitutes acceptable knowledge, including positivism, pragmatism, interpretivism and critical realism (Neville 2007; Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Bryman and Bell 2011; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015). Consistent with the adopted subjectivist ontology, the study embraced the epistemology of interpretivism, which views reality as subjective, in the footsteps of several scholars whose TM studies held the same view (Staunton 2014; Zhang 2014; Adebola 2017; Jamu 2017; McCracken *et al.*, 2017).

Interpretivism was prioritised because its prescribed means of obtaining answers matched the manner in which the study secured its answers to the research questions, i.e. through conducting interviews with key stakeholders who were among the people involved in ascribing meanings to and interpretations of the involvement of LMs in TM in the context of the CSO. The interviews were deemed suitable as they allowed me to enter the social world of key stakeholders and fully understand TM implementation through the lens of LMs from their perspective (Greener 2008; Adebola 2017; McCracken *et al.*, 2017:62). This approach is consistent with the interpretivist attribute which argues that researchers do not rigidly seek answers for their studies, but rather approach the reality through subjects who own their experiences within a contextual setup (Thanh and Thanh 2015:25). Furthermore, the approach matched with an interpretivist attribute that argues that interpretivists “enter the social world of research subjects and understand their world from their point of view” (Saunders *et al.*, 1997:107). Finally, the study’s approach matched with the attribute of interpretivism which suggests that interpretivist researchers should use the human capacity to understand human beings from the inside, through empathy, shared experience and culture (Hammersley 2013:26). Thus, the relationship between myself as a researcher and the subjects in the study was close, as I was part of the process.

Moreover, TM is a context-dependent discipline and is influenced by the larger societal and operational context (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020:3). As a result, organisations interpret and apply TM based on their specific context, leading to various definitions and a potential lack of clarity about its scope (Lewis and Heckman 2006:139; Silzer and Dowell 2010; Elegbe 2010:2; Dries 2013; Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013a). While most TM research has focused on organisations in America, Europe and Asia, with little in Africa, other regions, such as that of the CSO, have received limited attention (Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013:1745; Anlesinya *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, organisations outside the studied regions such as the CSO may not benefit from existing TM research, due to potential contextual differences (Tawodzera 2018:4). In light of the above, this study aimed to contribute to the development of TM knowledge by understanding the actual meanings, interpretations and perceptions that people associated with the involvement of LMs in TM within this unexplored CSO context. The research aim aligns well with the principles of interpretivism, particularly its focus on understanding the meanings individuals attribute to phenomena (actions, decisions, beliefs, values, etc.) within their social worlds (Snape and Spencer 2003:3; Bryman and Bell 2011:19; Kabwe 2011:103). In this regard, interpretivism was deemed appropriate for the study as the knowledge unearthed on the involvement of LMs in TM was derived from interpreting the meanings that the key stakeholders attached to TM implementation through the lens of LMs within the CSO, from their point of view.

Given the above considerations, positivist epistemology was deemed unsuitable for the study due to its inflexibility, which contradicted the study's aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of LMs' involvement in TM (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2002; Creswell 2009; Bryman and Bell 2011; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015). The study found critical realist epistemology potentially suitable for the research, but ultimately deemed it inappropriate because it fails to align with the study's goals. The research does not aim to critically examine LMs' involvement in TM and subsequently alter TM implementation, as is often the case in studies guided by the epistemology of critical realism (Neuman 2003; Kaewsaeng-on 2016). Furthermore, the study does not aim to provide a historical account of LMs' involvement in TM, as is typically pursued in studies guided by critical realism (Bryman and Bell 2011; Kaewsaeng-on 2016; Saunders *et al.*, 2016). Another potential epistemological approach was pragmatism; however, it was not considered, due to the desire to establish a distinct identity for the study.



## 4.5 The underpinning inductive approach

The study, like those of other scholars (Zhang 2014; Lopez-Cotalero 2018; Whysall *et al.*, 2019; Tyskbo 2020), took an inductive approach to examine the involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO. This approach was chosen because it aligned well with the interpretivism epistemology and the nature of the study, which required flexibility to gain a deep understanding of LMs' involvement in TM within the CSO. To ensure flexibility, the study avoided preconceived theories that could hinder deep comprehension (Mathews 2021:34). Consequently, empirical evidence was gathered by conducting one-on-one semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders at different levels within the CSO. These interviews were recorded and analysed through processes including transcription, familiarisation, coding and theming. The findings were then compared to existing literature to derive meaning (Zhang 2014; Tyskbo 2020:825). (Burney and Saleem 2008:5; Creswell 2009:9; Bryman and Bell 2011:13).

Additionally, as explained above, the literature indicates that TM studies have primarily focused on America, Europe and Asia, with minimal research conducted in Africa (Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013:1745; Anlesinya *et al.*, 2019). As a result, organisations outside these regions have not greatly benefited from TM studies because the uncovered TM knowledge is not applicable to their specific contexts (Tawodzera 2018:4), such as that of the CSO, characterised as it is by politics manifested in low leadership independence, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and a high power-distance culture, among other factors. Therefore, the inductive approach was chosen to consider contextual factors within the CSO context (Zhang 2014). This was possible because the inductive approach is about unearthing knowledge about a phenomenon in its natural contexts (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:146; Saunders *et al.*, 2016:147).

The preceding section confirms the adoption of the inductive approach. Yet, for the approach to materialise, the study ought to be situated within the qualitative research design, the topic of the following section.

## **4.6 Positioning the study within the qualitative research design**

Consistent with the adopted research epistemology (interpretivism), and research approach (inductive), the study adopted a qualitative research design, thus aligning itself with several scholars whose studies were guided by qualitative research protocols (Jones *et al.*, 2012; Zhang 2014; Adebola 2017; Evans 2017; Jamu 2017; Whysall *et al.*, 2019). Despite criticism of its time-consuming data collection and analysis methods (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2002:20), qualitative research was, nonetheless, deemed suitable for this study for the following reasons. First, the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of how key stakeholders (e.g. line managers (LMs), human resource department staff, staff representative council (SRC), senior management (SM), officers, and supervisors) perceived TM and how it influenced their decisions, motivations and actions in implementing TM through the lenses of LMs within the context of CSO. To achieve this, data was collected by conducting one-on-one semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders at different levels within the CSO. This data collection method is consistent with one of the key attributes of qualitative research, which states that “qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the natural context of the phenomena and do not bring subjects to a laboratory or send questionnaires to participants to complete” (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2002:19; Thomas 2003:1-2; Creswell 2009:175; Miles *et al.*, 2014; Adebola 2017; Evans 2017; Whysall *et al.*, 2019). In addition, the aim and method of the study fit well with another characteristic of qualitative research, which states that qualitative researchers aim to unearth participants’ comprehension of a phenomenon under investigation and the influence of their understanding on their actions in relation to the phenomenon (Miles and Huberman 1994: 6; Snap and Spencer 2003:22).

The second reason for opting for qualitative research was driven by the study’s nature and objectives, which required my central involvement throughout the research process. In line with the study’s aim and approach, I conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders to gather data. These interviews were transcribed, and I thoroughly familiarised myself with the data. Subsequently, I coded, categorised and developed themes that contributed to understanding the role of LMs in TM. In addition to the interviews, I supplemented the data analysis with document analysis. The role I played in the study aligns with a significant characteristic of qualitative research, which recognises researchers as the primary instruments in the data collection process. They engage in activities such as examining documents, observing behaviour or conducting interviews with participants

(Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Fraenkel and Wallen 1990; Creswell 2009:175; Adebola 2017; Whysall *et al.*, 2019).

The third reason for prioritising qualitative research is the global scope of existing literature on TM. Previous studies have predominantly been conducted in America, Europe, Asia and, to a lesser extent, Africa (Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013:1745; Anlesinya *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, organisations outside of these regions, such as the CSO, have not fully benefited from these TM studies because the knowledge generated may not be applicable to their specific contexts (Tawodzera 2018:4). In light of the above, the study aimed to develop TM knowledge relevant to the CSO. This was achieved by understanding the actual meanings, interpretations and perceptions that the key stakeholders (participants) associated with TM and how these affected their actions in implementing TM through the lens of LMs within the context of the CSO (Sidani and Ariss 2014; Glaister *et al.*, 2021). This approach to knowledge development aligns with inductive knowledge development, which is one of the key attributes of qualitative research, as it involves transforming participants' interpretations, meanings, perceptions and understanding of phenomena into codes, patterns, themes and relationships. This process ultimately leads to knowledge development about a phenomenon being studied (Amaratunga *et al.*, 2002:19; Creswell 2009; Saunders *et al.*, 2012:48; Adebola 2017).

Finally, the choice for qualitative research was influenced by the sources of the data. As mentioned earlier, qualitative data was obtained through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders at various levels, complemented by the analysis of secondary data (Zhang 2014; Adebola 2017; Jamu 2017). This entails that the study employed multiple data sources, specifically interviews and documents, thus aligning with one of the key characteristics of qualitative research, which emphasises the use of diverse data sources, such as interviews, observations and documents, rather than relying solely on a single data source (Creswell 2009:175; Adebola 2017).

Yet, reflexivity is a crucial aspect of qualitative research, as it necessitates the researcher's contemplation on their own role in influencing the research and the steps taken to mitigate challenges and ensure its credibility (Haynes 2012; Symon and Cassell 2012; Adebola 2017). This aspect was particularly pertinent to my study, which focused on examining my organisation among other factors. Accordingly, I engaged in reflexivity throughout the research process and the report of the exercise is presented in Section 4.12.

Having located the study within the qualitative research methodology, the following section focuses on the research strategy.

#### **4.7 The relevance of an embedded single case strategy to the study**

To allow for in-depth examination of the involvement of LMs in TM within the CSO context, this study employed an *embedded single case study research strategy*. This approach aligns with previous scholars who have utilised the same strategy in their own investigations (Boussebaa and Morgan 2008; Burbach and Royle 2010; Huang and Tansley 2012; Staunton 2014; Yin 2014; Tawodzera 2018:42; Tyskbo 2019; Bonneton *et al.* 2020; Samuelson and Martea 2020; Tyskbo 2020). This strategy was given precedence mainly because of its capability to facilitate an in-depth examination of the involvement of LMs in TM by analysing sub-units of analysis (e.g. varied levels of employees, such as LMs, SM, officers, supervisors, SRC, and SM) within the main unit under analysis – the CSO itself (Addicott *et al.*, 2007; Whelan *et al.*, 2010; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Yin 2014:9; Robson and McCartan 2016; Saunders *et al.*, 2016:186; Gustafsson 2017; Bonneton *et al.*, 2020). The ability of an embedded single case study research strategy to facilitate in-depth understanding lies in its flexibility, which provided me with opportunities to interact with the participants and probe further into the phenomenon (Yin 2014). Furthermore, this flexibility allowed me to use multi-method data collection (e.g. one-on-one semi-structured interviews augmented by document analysis) (Zhang 2014; Robson and McCartan 2016:150; Saunders *et al.*, 2016:186; Adebola 2017; Jamu 2017). As a result, an experimental strategy was not favoured owing to its association with quantitative studies (Saunders *et al.*, 2016:178). Similarly, a historical strategy was deemed unsuitable, as it focuses on past events and lacks the ability to handle a wide range of evidence (Yin 2014:9;12). Likewise, survey and archive analysis strategies were eliminated from consideration, as they do not effectively address the research questions pertaining to “how” or “which” which are key questions of the research (*ibid.*).

However, the embedded single case research strategy has been accused of a lack of generalisability and breadth (MacLeod and Pennell, 1993:536; Stake 1995; Renwick 2003; Crowe *et al.*, 2011). While acknowledging the criticism, it should be emphasised that the present study was not aimed at attaining generalisation/breadth, as is the case with holistic multiple and embedded case studies; rather, it sought an in-depth understanding of the key stakeholders’ understanding of the involvement of LMs in TM within their particular

context of the CSO (Renwick 2003; Bryman 2004; Kelliher 2005: 123; Yin 2014, Gustafsson 2017). The study thus follows several scholars whose studies aimed at an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon by adopting a single case study research strategy (Boussebaa and Morgan 2008; Burbach and Royle 2010; Huang and Tansley 2012; Staunton 2014; Tawodzera 2018:42; Tyskbo 2019; Bonneton *et al.*, 2020; Samuelson and Martea 2020; Tyskbo 2020). Besides, the study responds to the call by Cooke (2018:11) and Cooke *et al.* (2022) for an in-depth single case study human-centred qualitative research.

Notwithstanding the above, the nature of the case under study and the circumstances surrounding it (e.g. limitations) made the adoption of an embedded single case study more meaningful, practical and ethical compared to multiple and embedded case studies (Yin 2014:51-53). This was because the chosen CSO met the criterion for considering a single case study research strategy, namely its “uniqueness” (Yin 2014:51; Saunders *et al.*, 2016:186). The Malawian banking industry comprises the CSO and commercial banks. Initially, a multiple case study approach was considered, with the CSO as the primary case and commercial banks as comparative cases due to their presence in the sector. However, the CSO and commercial banks differ significantly. The CSO is a state-owned, non-profit entity responsible for price and financial stability in the country, overseeing compliance with banking regulations, and can be metaphorically considered the “mother” of commercial banks. On the other hand, commercial banks are profit-driven and regulated by the CSO, and directly serve customers by managing personal accounts. These substantial differences make it inappropriate to treat them as multiple cases, as comparing them would be like comparing a mother to a child. Thus, the choice of a single case study is justified based on the criterion of case uniqueness for this research strategy (Saunders *et al.*, 2016:168).

Finally, the CSO, along with commercial banks and financial institutions often hesitate to allow an outsider to conduct a study due to concerns about exposing their business secrets and sensitive information to competitors or the public, potentially impacting their competitiveness and reputation. Yet, the CSO allowed me to conduct a study on TM because I am an employee and the PhD programme that I was pursuing was sponsored by them. Along the same lines, the inclusion of commercial banks in the study originally existed, yet the plan never materialised because none of the commercial banks were willing to participate in the study due to the fears mentioned above. This left me with

no choice but to proceed with the single case study research strategy using the CSO. The above narrative is consistent with the rationale for considering a single case study namely, the opportunity to access the case study/ revelatory (Bryman and Bell 2011: 62; Saunders *et al*, 2016:168). Yet, even if commercial banks and financial institutions had agreed to participate, it wouldn't have been feasible due to the data collection timing coinciding with the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic when most of these institutions had restrictions.

The previous section presented the adopted embedded single case study research strategy and the reasons for prioritising it over other strategies. In line with the preferred research strategy, the subsequent sections examine the way in which data was collected and analysed.

## **4.8 Data collection methods**

### **4.8.1 Sampling of participants**

In line with the study's aim and chosen approach, it adopted non-probability sampling techniques, namely purposive and quota techniques, to identify participants for the study (Iles *et al.*, 2010a; Bryman 2012:187; Saunders *et al.*, 2012:261; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015:129; Erasmus *et al.*, 2017). The suitability of purposive sampling stemmed from the fact that it ensured that participants identified from the various sub-units (LMs, human resource department Staff, SM, officers, supervisors and SRC) were in an advantageous position or had the necessary knowledge to provide information that answered the research questions (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003:78; Saunders *et al.*, 2012:287; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015:129; Adebola 2017). To ensure that each sub-group (employee levels, functional units, departments, gender) was represented in the sample, the quota sampling method was chosen to make sure that the sample is as diverse as possible, in order to have a balanced understanding of the scope and nature of the involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020). Overall, quota and purposive sampling were chosen because they created a synergy that ensured each critical sub-unit had a representation in the sample and was best positioned to provide the required information (e.g. LMs, SM) (Denscombe 2010:237).

#### **4.8.2. Sample size and participants' profiles**

Due to the lack of consensus on the appropriate sample size for qualitative studies (Ritchie *et al.*, 2003:84; Saunders *et al.*, 2012), the sample size for this study was guided by Saunders *et al.* (2012:283), who recommended a sample size of between 12-30 participants for a heterogeneous population; and by Ritchie *et al.* (2003:84), who recommended a sample size of not more than 50 for easy management of the complexity of the analytical task. Consequently, the sample size for the study was 47 participants, i.e. below 50 and above 30. In line with the proposed sampling techniques and the CSO staff profile (a complement of 719 during data collection), the 47 participants were identified using the following criteria: position/rank; department; age; gender; functional area; and possession of important knowledge.

Consistent with the sampling technique, sampling criteria, privacy protocols and the CSO's consent to data collection, I requested the CSO to provide me with an human resource department gatekeeper for the project. This gatekeeper assisted me in identifying the participants and with my initial communication with them. The process began with briefing the gatekeeper about the project and the inclusion criteria for the participants (position/rank, age, gender, functional area and department). Additionally, I advised the gatekeeper that I needed a list of back-up participants, in case some withdrew for fear of contracting COVID-19 or other illness, among other things (see section 4.8.5). The gatekeeper emailed the selected employees, informing them that I would be contacting them to request their participation in the study. Thereafter, I began emailing them to ask for their participation and made interview appointments for those who accepted.

The final sample included twenty-three (23) LMs; four (4) human resource department staff; four (4) SM; fifteen (15) other staff – officers and supervisors; and (1) representative from SRC. The majority of participants in the sample were LMs who were the main players, thus responding to the call by Tyskbo (2020:836) for a study on the involvement of LMs in TM using a multi-stakeholder approach, with LMs as the main actors dominating the stakeholders. In addition, it responds to the call by Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* (2020:463) for a multi-stakeholder study of the involvement of LMs in TM. In terms of gender, the majority of participants were men (n=32), as women were (n=15). This represents 6.8% and 6% of the CSO's total males and females, respectively. In age terms, most participants (n=15) were between 41 and 50 years old. Most participants (n=15) had

work experience ranging from 16 and 20 years, with only few (n=1) having 26-30 years of experience. Most participants (n=39) had a postgraduate degree, followed by participants (n=7) with a bachelor's degree and one participant (n=1) with an advanced diploma. Details of the characteristics of the interview participants are provided in the Table 3 below.

**Table 3: The demographic characteristics of interview participants**

No	Name	Demographic Attribute	Number of Participants
1	Gender	Male	32
		Female	15
2	Age	26-30 years	1
		31-35 years	6
		36-40 years	9
		41-45 years	15
		46-50 years	12
		Over 50 years	4
3	Qualifications	Advanced Diploma	1
		Bachelor's Degree	7
		Masters degree	38
		PhD	1
4	Years of service in the CSO	1-5 years	2
		6-10 years	10
		11-15 years	8
		16-20 years	15
		21-25 years	8
		26-30 years	1
		31-35 years	3
5	Positions held in CSO	Officers	6
		Supervisors	14
		Line Managers	23
		Heads of Department	4
6	Stakeholder Category	Senior Management	4
		Line Managers	23
		Human Resource Department staff	4
		Officers and supervisors	15
		Staff Representative Council (SRC)	1



### **4.8.3. The relevance of semi-structured interviews for the study**

The study used semi-structured interviews to collect data due to their flexibility, thus aligning with previous studies that adopted a similar approach (Kotlyar 2018; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018; Blayney *et al.*, 2020; Glaister *et al.*, 2021; Mowbray *et al.*, 2022). This allowed me to ask interviewees (stakeholders) questions related to the topic of the study (i.e. the involvement of LMs in TM). Additionally, it allowed me to ask follow-up questions to enable stakeholders to provide detailed explanations of how and why TM was interpreted and implemented in that particular way, specifically in the context of the CSO (Brewerton and Millward 2001:70; Bryman and Bell 2011; Zhang 2014; Jamu 2017; Blayney *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, semi-structured interviews are well-suited for studies, such as the present one, that aim to comprehend the meanings, opinions and perceptions held by participants (e.g. key stakeholders) regarding a phenomenon (e.g. the involvement of language models in translation memory). Such interviews also allow for an exploration of how this understanding influences participants' attitudes, actions and decisions in implementing the phenomenon (e.g. translation memory through the lens of LMs) within its natural context (i.e. the context of the CSO) (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:378).

Given the above, it was determined that data collection tools such as structured and unstructured interviews were not appropriate for the study. Structured interviews are more suitable for gathering quantitative data, whereas the study required qualitative data (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Similarly, unstructured interviews were considered unsuitable due to their potential to deviate from the topic, as respondents can freely discuss the broad subject without much guidance (Skinner *et al.*, 2014:55; Robson and McCartan 2016:284).

Yet semi-structured interviews have been criticised for their potential for interviewer bias, which may ultimately result in low validity and reliability of the data gathered (Robson 2011; Yin 2014:105). To address this concern, the study followed Yin's (2014) recommendation, and Denzin's (1978:61) approach, of utilising an additional source of evidence, namely document analysis. This approach was further supported by Bowen (2009:28), who advocated for scholars to employ multiple methods in order to achieve convergence and validation through the use of diverse data sources and methods. Furthermore, the study collected its data by conducting interviews with key stakeholders from several levels of the CSO.

#### **4.8.4. Development of an interview guide and piloting**

The first phase of data collection involved the development of the interview guide, which was influenced by several scholars (Budhwar 2000a; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Cooke *et al.*, 2014; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018; Blayney 2020) and testing of the tool through piloting. The pilot study aimed to ensure high-quality data collection by allowing for modifications to the interview questions, where necessary. Five participants were selected from the targeted groups, namely SRC, human resource department staff, LMs, officers and supervisors, to participate in the exercise, with the intention of having representatives from nearly all groups to ensure the appropriateness and suitability of the data collection plan and tool for all participants (Kim 2010:1; Kaewsangon 2016:159). The pilot exercise resulted in revision of certain interview questions and the formulation of backup questions to address difficulties encountered by participants in comprehending some of the main interview questions.

Firstly, it was found that some participants had trouble understanding the question regarding the extent of LMs' involvement in TM practices (talent acquisition, talent development, performance management, etc.). This difficulty stemmed from the use of the term "extent", which was unclear to the participants. However, when it was replaced with the phrase "what specific activities", the participants had no trouble understanding the question. Consequently, the interview question "what specific activities do LMs do in TM practices (talent acquisition, talent development, performance management, etc.)" was included as a backup question to address such situations.

Secondly, the pilot exercise revealed that the inclusion of the term "TM/HRM practices" in certain interview questions, such as "how does the CSO use TM/HRM practices to manage talent?", made the questions highly technical and difficult for some participants to comprehend. However, when the term "TM/HRM practices" was replaced with a specific TM practice like "talent development" or "performance management" or "recruitment", participants found it easier to understand. Therefore, additional questions referring to specific TM practices were included in the backup interview guide to accommodate participants who experienced difficulties comprehending a bundle of TM/HRM practices (e.g. how does the CSO develop talent? How does the CSO manage the performance of their talent?).

Overall, the observations and reviews of the data collection tool did not have a significant impact on the research questions or the research aim, as no revisions were made. Consequently, the data collected during the pilot exercise was included in the main study (Kaewsaeng-on 2016:159). The final interview guide, with main questions and backup questions, is provided in Appendix IA.

#### **4.8.5. Conducting interviews**

The interviews took place during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Malawi. Therefore, it is important to understand how the pandemic affected the interview process before going on to explain how the interviews were conducted. The pandemic instilled fear in both me and the participants, which had the potential to affect the quality of the data and consequently the accuracy and credibility of the study. This fear stemmed from the negative impact of the pandemic, such as sickness and death, on individuals and society as a whole. The face-to-face nature of the interviews of the study heightened the fear, due to the heightened risk of contracting the virus. My fear intensified when I learned that some participants who had agreed to be interviewed had passed away after contracting the virus. Moreover, the fear increased when I discovered that Malawi had only limited access to ventilators, mainly found in private clinics. Additionally, frequent and prolonged power outages in Malawi made it difficult for ventilators to operate, resulting in deaths when they stopped working due to power failures. This meant that the chances of survival after contracting the virus were very slim. Consequently, the COVID-19 pandemic caused anxiety throughout the data collection period, with uncertainty each day due to participants cancelling appointments out of fear of contracting or having already contracted the virus. Participant withdrawals posed difficulties for data collection, as finding replacements within the research timeframe was challenging.

To alleviate my fear, I empathised with health frontlines who were directly confronting the COVID-19 pandemic in hospitals on a daily basis at that particular time. I learned that when you are afraid of something, the thought of people whose challenges are greater than yours motivates you and encourages you to rise to the challenge. In my case, the bravery of the health personnel in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic on a daily basis gave me the courage not to fear it, but to face it. In addition, participants who also agreed to give interviews eased my fear, as I felt they were doing me a great favour by allowing me to interview them despite the risky situation. Furthermore, I allayed the anxiety by

requesting the human resource department gatekeeper to help me identify back-up participants to hedge against withdrawals that might happen to the initial list of participants. Besides, after each day, I spent more time taking a hot shower, steaming, and taking some herbs that were very popular at that time to boost my immunity, in case I caught the virus. Finally, as a Christian who believes in divine intervention and believes in God's favour, I prayed for His protection every day, and that helped to allay the anxiety.

To alleviate participants' fear, I contacted them prior to our meetings through phone calls and emails to reassure them that COVID-19 protocols would be followed during the interviews, including social distancing, wearing face masks and using hand sanitizers. I faithfully adhered to these protocols during our meetings to reciprocate the respect they showed by agreeing to be interviewed. Fortunately, I completed the data collection without contracting the virus and with only a few participant withdrawals.

In addition to managing the impact of the pandemic on interviews, the interviews were conducted in accordance with academic ethics protocols approved for the study. Prior to the interviews, participants were briefed about the project's aim, their rights and their role in the interview process. They were then asked to sign a consent form confirming their understanding, voluntary participation and agreement to have the proceedings recorded, in line with the information provided (see Appendix IB). Participants were given the opportunity to be interviewed at their preferred locations and time. Many participants preferred to have the interviews at the recreation centre, due to its relaxed and comfortable environment compared to their offices. Some participants agreed to recording on the condition that the audio file would be transcribed three days after the interview and then deleted in their presence. They believed that their voice could be easily recognised, unlike a written document, and wanted to ensure their privacy. This was despite my assurance to them that audio files would be anonymised and treated with strict confidentiality. Thus, all audio files were deleted after transcription.

The interview sessions lasted between 50 and 90 minutes, and each session was unique. The design allowed participants to answer questions flexibly, while also providing me with the opportunity to ask new questions based on their responses to gather further in-depth data (Bryman and Bell 2011:467; Saunders *et al.*, 2012:378; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015:446). This resulted in varying the order of the interview questions while ensuring that all key questions were asked, maintaining consistency across all participants (Staunton

2014). After conducting interviews with 47 participants, I reached a point of data saturation and decided not to proceed with additional interviews.

Several challenges were encountered during the data collection process. Some interview sessions were interrupted by ringing desk phones in participants' offices or the presence of children or family members in the recreation centre. Each interruption required pausing the sessions and addressing the distraction before resuming. These interruptions disrupted the momentum of the interviews, but I quickly recapitulated where we left off to reignite the conversation. Additionally, some who expressed interest in participating were unable to do so, due to being in quarantine after testing positive for COVID-19. Unfortunately, some of these participants passed away after succumbing to the virus. In such cases, they were replaced by individuals from the backup participant list.

#### **4.8.6. Document analysis**

In addition to conducting one-on-one semi-structured interviews, the study also examined various documents from CSOs (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015:130; Zhang 2015; Kotlyar 2018; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018). While this approach has received criticism due to concerns about information retrieval, reporting bias and its indirect relevance to the research question, it nevertheless offered specific information that both validated and complemented the data gathered from interviews with key stakeholders within the CSO context (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:308; Yin 2014:107; Jamu 2017). In line with Yin (2014), the study analysed the several documents as follows.

- Human Resource Policies and Procedures for Recruitment
- Annual Reports for the CSO
- Administrative Notices
- Standing Instructions
- Human Resource Department Periodic Reports
- CSO Strategic Plans
- Business Plans for varied CSO's departments
- General Notice on the CSO response to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic
- Guidelines for Human Resource Policies and Procedures for the Leadership Development Programme
- General Notice on the resumption of the Leadership Development Programme

- General Notices on the performance management system
- General Notices on the suspension of training
- Guidelines for Human Resource Policies and Procedures for recruitment
- Job descriptions for the Heads of Department
- Job descriptions for the Managers of various departments
- Human Resource Policies and Procedures for Training and Development
- Job Descriptions for the Officers of various departments in the CSO
- Guidelines for Human Resource Policies and Procedures for Performance Management System
- Guidelines on Human Resource Policies and Procedures for Grievances
- Human Resource Policies and Procedures for Promotion
- Guideline on Human Resource Policies and Procedures for Promotion
- Guidelines on Human Resource Policies and Procedures for Training Evaluation
- Guidelines on Human Resource Policies and Procedures for Long-term training
- Standing Instructions on self-initiated training
- Guidelines for Human Resource Policies and Procedures for Coaching
- Guidelines on Human Resource Policies and Procedures for Training Budget

#### **4.9 Data Analysis - Reflexive Thematic Analysis**

Data analysis was guided by a reflexive thematic analysis strategy (Braun and Clarke 2006:78; Clarke and Braun 2013; Braun *et al.*, 2019:855; Braun and Clarke 2021:2). Although this lacks a definitive procedure, the analysis was nevertheless given precedence as it is not bound by a framework or theoretical stance and its latitude facilitated an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of data in line with the nature of the study (Braun and Clarke 2006:78; Clarke and Braun 2013; Maguire and Delahunt 2017: 3352; Braun *et al.*, 2019:855). Additionally, the reflexive thematic analysis was well-suited for the study's interpretive epistemological stance, qualitative research strategy and inductive approach, as it shared the element of flexibility (Braun and Clarke 2021). Consequently, data analysis strategies such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Grounded Theory (GT), Content Analysis (CA) and Discourse Analysis (DA) were deemed unsuitable for the study due to their inherent theoretical stance, which makes them highly restrictive and inflexible, and thus inconsistent with the nature of the study (Glaser *et al.*, 1968; Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006:78; Chamaz, 2006; Langdridge, 2007; Clarke and Braun, 2013; Braun

and Clarke, 2016:191; Terry *et al.*, 2017:21-22; Clarke and Braun 2018: 108-109; Braun *et al.*, 2019:855).

Reflexive thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis strategy that underscores the researcher's active involvement in shaping and interpreting themes derived from the data. (Clarke and Braun, 2013; Braun and Clarke, 2016:191). It's a cyclical and introspective process where the researcher's subjective insights, perspectives, and interpretations are integrated alongside the data itself (Braun and Clarke, 2006:78; Clarke and Braun, 2013; Braun and Clarke, 2016:191; Clarke and Braun 2018: 108-109; Braun *et al.*, 2019:855). According to Braun and Clarke (2019), Clarke and Braun (2013) reflexive thematic analysis begin with familiarisation with the data. This entails immersing oneself in the transcripts or texts, gaining intimate familiarity with the content through repeated readings and note-taking. Following this, with the research questions in mind, researchers code the data systematically, identifying and labelling relevant features that hold potential significance or addresses the reach questions while recognising patterns and variations across the dataset. The next step involves generating initial themes, where codes are organised into broader conceptual categories that capture the essence of the data. These initial themes undergo critical review and refinement to ensure coherence and consistency with the dataset, with adjustments made through merging, splitting, or discarding themes as necessary. This exercise results in the generation of the candidate themes. The candidate themes undergo additional review, where they are merged as needed to tackle redundancy issues. They are then clearly defined, named, and ensured to be distinct, accurately reflecting the underlying data. The exercise results in the generation of themes. Finally, researchers produce a written report or narrative that presents the findings in a compelling and coherent analytical manner, supported by evidence from data extracts and contextual information. This iterative process ensures a rigorous and systematic analysis of qualitative data, facilitating the extraction of meaningful insights and interpretations.

In line with the adopted strategy, the process of data analysis commenced during data collection. Relevant notes were taken during interviews, in addition to the audio recordings (Creswell 2009:184, Saunders *et al.*, 2012:549,567). Subsequently, the interview recordings were manually transcribed verbatim (Creswell 2009:186; Rossman and Rallis 2017:450). The next step involved comprehending and reflecting on the overall meaning that key stakeholders attached to the implementation of TM through the lens of LMs. This was achieved by reading the transcripts repeatedly and making notes to gain familiarity

with the data, before engaging in the systematic coding process (Braun and Clarke 2006:87; Creswell 2009:185; Rossman and Rallis 2017:448; Braun *et al.*, 2019:853). Part of the exercise in this phase was undertaken in quarantine after returning from a “red” country (Malawi)<sup>8</sup> and it gave opportunity and more time to familiarise the transcripts.

With the research questions in mind (i.e. How is talent understood and managed through the lens of TM philosophy? How are LMs involved in TM? Which factors preclude or facilitate LMs’ involvement in TM?), the transcripts underwent a coding process. This involved systematically coding sentences and phrases that addressed the research questions or provided interesting information related to them (Creswell 2009:186; Rossman and Rallis 1998:171; Braun *et al.*, 2019:853; Maguire and Delahunt 2017:3355). The complete coding approach, influenced by the inductive nature of the study and the adopted reflexive thematic analysis, allowed for coding all relevant data. (Braun and Clarke 2013). Both semantic and latent coding strategies were employed to accommodate the complexity of the study data, which included both obvious and less obvious empirical indicators (Adu 2019; Braun, *et al.*, 2019:853). The entire coding exercise was performed using a Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) – NVIVO 12 – as it provides a transparent, smart, organised and efficient means of coding, categorising, analysing, storing and locating data that allows for contrasting varied codes (Creswell 2009:188; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Spencer *et al.*, 2014; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018). Appendix IC shows a NVIVO screenshot used to aid the analysis of the data.

Thus, a total of 108 codes were generated from the forty-seven (47) transcripts using NVIVO, as listed in Appendix ID: Reflexive Thematic Analysis Process I – Column Codes. Thereafter, the codes were exported to Microsoft Excel to facilitate full engagement with the data (Bryman 2012:608). With the help of Microsoft Excel, the imported 108 codes were extensively examined for similarities. The codes that shared common patterns were collated and grouped into clusters called “initial themes” (Braun and Clarke 2006:89; Maguire and Delahunt 2017:3357; Braun *et al.*, 2019:853). This was achieved by comparing empirical evidence for each generated code against the code’s definition and then comparing it against another code. Thus, out of 108 codes generated, 33 initial themes

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<sup>8</sup> From 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021, the UK Government identified countries using a “traffic light” system according to the perceived risk to travelers from COVID-19, red meaning “high-risk”, amber “medium-risk” and green “low-risk”.



were generated, as shown in Appendix ID: Reflexive Thematic Analysis Process I - Initial Themes column.

The 33 initial themes were further reviewed to ensure they matched with the empirical data and had no underlying shared patterns. Consequently, initial themes that overlapped with other initial themes and shared the strongest underlying patterns were clustered together to generate candidate themes. The exercise resulted in the consolidation of 33 initial themes into 12 candidate themes, as shown in Appendix ID: Reflexive Thematic Analysis Process I. The candidate themes were also reviewed to identify other common patterns between them. Furthermore, candidate themes that had “a central organising idea that captured a meaningful pattern across the dataset, as well as different manifestations of that pattern”, were promoted to a theme (Braun and Clarke 2006:92; Maguire and Delahunt 2017:3358; Braun *et al.*, 2019:856). Thus, the exercise led to the consolidation of 12 candidate themes into six developed themes, as shown in Appendix ID: Reflexive Thematic Analysis Process I. Later, the Excel sheet was used as a reference document to generate initial themes, candidate themes and complete themes in NVIVO. This was done to manage systematic coding, storage, reviews and easy retrieval of empirical data from the software.

In accordance with the final stages of the reflexive thematic analysis, particularly the further review of themes and presentation of the results, each theme from Appendix ID: Reflexive Thematic Analysis Process I was clustered together with the corresponding candidate themes, initial themes and codes that built it up to provide a structure for structuring and presenting the study results. The outcome of the exercise was Figure 9: Reflexive Thematic Analysis II. Furthermore, several changes were made to Appendix ID and are reflected in Figure 9. Details of the changes made are provided in Appendix IF. Thus, the exercise led to the structuring of themes for results presentation, as provided in Figure 9: Thematic Analysis Process II below,

**Figure 8: Reflexive Thematic Analysis Process II**

<p><b>Theme A: Hybrid approach to managing talent characterised by varied definitions using TM practices.</b></p> <p><b>A1 Varied talent definitions</b></p> <p>A.1.1 Talent as attributes people possessed</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Talent as highly-quality relevant qualification</li> <li>2. Talent as basic required knowledge</li> <li>3. Talent as tech-savvy skill</li> <li>4. Impact of COVID-19 on talent definition-tech-savvy</li> <li>5. Talent as innovative strength</li> </ol> <p>6. Talent as entire workforce</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Talent as experience</li> <li>8. Experience one of the determinants for talent identification</li> <li>9. Experience one of the determinants for talent development</li> <li>10. Talent as adaptability</li> <li>11. Talent as ability to transfer knowledge to work</li> <li>12. Talent as natural gift skill</li> <li>13. Talent as discretionary behaviour</li> </ol> <p>A.1.2 Talent as elite staff</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. Talent as high performers</li> <li>15. Talent as people with potential</li> </ol> <p>A.1.3 Flexibility of talent definition</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16. Flexible talent definition</li> <li>17. Inflexible talent definition</li> </ol> <p>A.1.4 Impact of context on talent definition</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18. Case study Organisation mandate</li> <li>19. Government forces</li> </ol> <p><b>A2 Hybrid TM philosophy</b></p> <p>A.2.1.1.1 Operationalisation of exclusive key position TM philosophy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20. Differentiated Performance Management System</li> <li>21. Leadership Development Programme</li> <li>22. Differentiated talent attraction and retention initiatives</li> <li>23. Prioritisation of long-term training to strategic positions</li> </ol> <p>A.2.1.1.2 Mixed impacts of key position TM philosophy on all staff</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24. Enhanced continuance commitment on staff in key positions</li> <li>25. Frustrated staff in non-key positions</li> </ol> <p>A.2.1.1.3 Mixed reactions on the rationale for key position TM philosophy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>26. Justifications for strategic position TM philosophy</li> <li>27. Justifications against strategic position TM philosophy</li> </ol> <p>A.2.2 Inclusive approach to managing talent</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>28. Inclusive self-initiated talent development for all</li> <li>29. Inclusive self-initiated talent development motivated staff</li> </ol>	<p><b>B3 LMs implement TM decisions.</b></p> <p>B.3.1. LMs implemented talent development decisions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>58. LMs monitored talent development budget</li> <li>59. LMs ensured approved employees attended training</li> <li>60. LMs ensured staff shared knowledge to colleagues</li> <li>61. LMs facilitated in-house training programme</li> <li>62. LMs coached and mentored staff</li> <li>63. LMs supported employees on self-initiated programme</li> </ol> <p><b>B4 LMs acquire TM expertise</b></p> <p>B.4.1 LMs acquired TM expertise</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>64. LMs attended leadership development programme</li> </ol> <p>B.4.1.2 Mixed reviews of leadership development programme</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>65. Effect of change of LDP Consultant on LMs</li> <li>66. Insufficient LMs TM training</li> <li>67. Sufficient LMs TM training</li> </ol>
<p><b>Theme B: LMs initiate, propose and implement TM decisions and acquire TM expertise.</b></p> <p><b>B1 LMs initiate TM processes</b></p> <p>B.1.1. LMs initiate talent acquisition and identification</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30. Identify vacancy</li> <li>31. Drew job description</li> <li>32. Formulate interview questions</li> <li>33. LMs excluded from shortlisting</li> <li>34. Bureaucracy and exclusion from shortlisting</li> </ol> <p>B.1.2 LMs initiate talent development process</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>35. LMs undertook training needs analysis</li> <li>36. LMs endorsed applications for self-initiated</li> </ol> <p>B.1.3 LMs initiated performance management</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>37. LMs drew performance contracts</li> </ol> <p><b>B2 LMs propose TM decisions</b></p> <p>B.2.1 LMs propose decision for talent acquisition and identification process</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>38. LMs participated in talent selection interviews</li> <li>39. LMs propose names for promotion</li> <li>40. Promotion criteria-talent identification</li> <li>41. Lack of transparency in promotion</li> <li>42. LMs lack of authority to handle grievances</li> <li>43. Promotion grievances resolved by HRD.</li> </ol> <p>B.2.2 LMs propose talent development decision</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>44. LMs nominate employees for talent development</li> <li>45. LMs deviation from short-term training nomination rules</li> <li>46. Justifications for deviating nominating rules</li> <li>47. Criteria for long-term training nominations Position, TNA and years of service</li> <li>48. Criticism for long-term nomination criteria</li> <li>49. Justifications for long-term nomination criteria</li> </ol> <p>B.2.3 LMs propose performance management decisions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50. LMs appraise employees</li> <li>51. Performance ratings disagreements</li> <li>52. Performance disagreements resolved at LMs level -dialogue</li> <li>53. Performance disagreement resolved through LMs withdraw</li> <li>54. Performance disagreements resolved at director level-dialogue</li> <li>55. Motivations behind escalating grievance above 56. HRPP, promotions, merit pay.</li> </ol> <p>B.2.4 LMs propose talent development budget</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>57. LMs proposed talent development budget</li> </ol>	<p><b>Theme C: LMs cautious and compromised involvement in TM due to contextual factors</b></p> <p><b>C1 Low leadership independence</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>99. Politics- rationale for low leadership independence</li> <li>100. Compromised acquisition of TM expertise by LMs</li> <li>101. Compromised involvement of LMs in talent development</li> <li>102. Compromised involvement of LMs in performance management</li> <li>103. Compromised involvement of LMs in promotion</li> </ol> <p><b>C2 COVID-19</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>106. LMs failure to participate in talent acquisition and identification</li> <li>107. Compromised acquisition of TM expertise by LMs</li> <li>105. Compromised involvement of LMs in talent development</li> <li>104. Compromised involvement of LMs in performance management</li> </ol> <p><b>C3 Legal Instruments</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>108. LMs rationalisation of TM roles in line with employment legal instruments</li> </ol> <p><b>Theme D: barriers and facilitators of LMs' involvement in TM</b></p> <p><b>D1 Disposition of TM stakeholders</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>85. Lack of TM ownership by LMs - TM is HRD work</li> <li>86. LMs lack of TM knowledge</li> <li>87. Weak linkage between TM tasks and performance contract</li> <li>88. Office politics (gossip)</li> <li>89. Unilateral TM decision making by HODs</li> </ol> <p><b>D2 Resource constraints</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90. Financial constraints</li> <li>91. Shortage of and workloads</li> </ol> <p><b>D3 Case Study Organisation's Bureaucracy</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>92. Conservatism and strict adherence to rules</li> <li>93. Unilateral decision on staff movements by authorities</li> <li>94. LMs' lack of empowerment to make decisions</li> </ol> <p><b>D.4 TM stakeholders support</b></p> <p>D.4.1. Internal stakeholders</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>95. Availability of TM budget</li> <li>96. Availability of performance management system</li> <li>97. Availability of LMs TM training support - executive management and HRD.</li> </ol> <p>D.4.3 External stakeholders</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>98. Government and International Partners' Capacity building support, Government, IMF, World Bank</li> </ol> <p><b>Theme E: Rationale for the extent of LMs involvement in TM</b></p> <p><b>E.1. Rationale for the extent of involvement of LMs in talent acquisition</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>69. LMs enhance effectiveness of the talent acquisition and identification process</li> <li>70. LMs ensure fairness and objectivity in talent identification process</li> </ol> <p><b>E.2. Enhance effectiveness on talent development process.</b></p> <p><b>E.3 Rationale for the extent of LMs involvement in performance Management</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>71. Enhance effectiveness of the PMS process</li> <li>72. Provide checks and balances on LMs</li> </ol> <p><b>Theme F: General Management strategies align core and TM strategies</b></p> <p><b>F1 Aligning core and TM tasks</b></p> <p>F.1.1. LMs used prioritisation to align TM and core tasks.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>75. Prioritised core over TM tasks</li> <li>76. LMs' lack of TM knowledge results in focusing on core tasks</li> <li>77. LMs were assessed on core tasks</li> <li>78. Lack of strict submission deadline for TM assignment</li> <li>79. Shortage of human resource</li> <li>80. LMs prioritised TM over Core tasks</li> <li>81. LMs prioritised TM to respecting HRD submission deadline</li> <li>82. LMs prioritisation of TM eases workload</li> <li>83. LMs align TM and Core tasks using delegation</li> <li>84. LMs align TM and Core tasks using time Management.</li> </ol> <p><b>F2 Nature of LMs' involvement in TM</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>73. Flexible LMs' involvement in TM</li> <li>74. Inflexible LMs' involvement in TM</li> </ol>

After beginning the task of writing the findings following the structure outlined in Figure 9, it became evident that there were overlapping themes and other aspects that required further analysis. Consequently, certain modifications were made to Figure 9, resulting in Figure 10. The specific details regarding the changes made in Figure 9 and their reflection in Figure 10 can be found in Appendix IG. As a result, the complete reflexive thematic analysis yielded three themes: (1) management of talent using hybrid TM philosophy; (2) LMs initiate, propose and implement TM decisions and acquire TM expertise; and (3) inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM due to contextual factors, as shown in Figure 10. Therefore, the structure and presentation of the results were guided by Figure 10, which represents Reflexive Thematic Analysis Process III, as provided below.

**Figure 9: Reflexive Thematic Analysis Process III**

<p><b>Theme A: Managing talents using hybrid TM philosophy</b></p> <p><b>A1 Varied talent definitions</b></p> <p>A.1.1 Talent as attributes people possessed</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Talent as highly-quality relevant qualification</li> <li>2. Talent as basic required knowledge</li> <li>3. Talent as tech-savvy skill</li> <li>4. Impact of COVID-19 on talent definition-tech-savvy</li> <li>5. Talent as innovative strength</li> <li>6. Talent as entire workforce</li> <li>7. Talent as experience</li> <li>8. Experience one of the determinants for talent identification</li> <li>9. Experience one of the determinants for talent development</li> <li>10. Talent as adaptability</li> <li>11. Talent as ability to transfer knowledge to work</li> <li>12. Talent as natural gift skill</li> <li>13. Talent as discretionary behaviour</li> </ol> <p>A.1.2 Talent as elite staff</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. Talent as high performers</li> <li>15. Talent as people with potential</li> </ol> <p>A.1.3 Flexibility of talent definition</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16. Flexible talent definition</li> <li>17. Inflexible talent definition</li> </ol> <p>A.1.4 Impact of context on talent definition</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18. Case study Organisation mandate</li> <li>19. Government forces</li> </ol> <p><b>A2 Hybrid TM philosophy</b></p> <p>A.2.1 Operationalisation of exclusive key position TM philosophy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20. Differentiated Performance Management System</li> <li>21. Leadership Development Programme</li> <li>22. Differentiated talent attraction and retention initiatives</li> <li>23. Prioritisation of long-term training to strategic positions</li> </ol> <p>A.2.1.1.2 Mixed impacts of key position TM philosophy on all staff</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24. Enhanced continuance commitment on staff in key positions</li> <li>25. Frustrated staff in non-key positions</li> </ol> <p>A.2.1.1.3 Mixed reactions on the rationale for key position TM philosophy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>26. Justifications for strategic position TM philosophy</li> <li>27. Justifications against strategic position TM philosophy</li> </ol> <p>A.2.2 Inclusive approach to managing talent</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>28. Inclusive self-initiated talent development for all</li> <li>29. Inclusive self-initiated talent development motivated staff</li> </ol> <p><b>Theme B: LMs initiate, propose and implement TM decisions and acquire TM expertise</b></p> <p><b>B1 Talent acquisition and identification</b></p> <p>B.1.1 LMs initiate talent acquisition and identification</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30. LMs Identify vacancy</li> <li>31. LMs draw job description</li> <li>32. LMs formulate interview questions</li> <li>33. LMs exclusion from shortlisting</li> <li>34. Bureaucracy and exclusion from shortlisting</li> </ol> <p>B.1.2 LMs propose decision for talent acquisition and identification</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>38. LMs participated in talent selection interviews</li> <li>39. LMs propose names for promotion</li> <li>40. Promotion criteria-talent identification</li> <li>41. Lack of transparency in promotion</li> <li>42. LMs lack of authority to handle grievances</li> <li>43. Promotion grievances resolved by HRD.</li> </ol> <p>B.1.3 Rationale for the extent of involvement of LMs in talent acquisition</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>69. LMs enhance effectiveness of talent acquisition and identification</li> <li>70. LMs ensure fairness and objectivity in talent identification process</li> </ol> <p><b>B2 Hybrid talent development</b></p> <p>B.2.1 LMs initiate talent development process</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>35. LMs undertook talent development needs analysis</li> <li>36. LMs endorsed applications for self-initiated programme</li> </ol> <p>B.2.2 LMs propose for talent development decision</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>44. LMs nominate employees for talent development</li> <li>45. LMs deviation from short-term training nomination rules</li> <li>46. Justifications for deviating nominating rules.</li> <li>47. Criteria for long-term training nominations</li> <li>Position, TNA and years of service</li> <li>48. Criticisms for long-term nomination criteria</li> <li>49. Justifications for long-term nomination criteria</li> </ol> <p>B.2.3 LMs implemented talent development decisions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>59. LMs ensured approved employees attended training</li> <li>60. LMs ensured staff shared knowledge to colleagues</li> <li>61. LMs facilitated in-house training programme</li> <li>62. LMs coached and mentored staff</li> <li>63. LMs supported employees on self-initiated programme</li> </ol> <p>B.2.4 LMs acquired TM expertise</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>64. LMs attended leadership development programme</li> </ol> <p>B.2.4.2 Mixed reviews of Leadership development programme</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>65. Effect of change of LDP consultants on LMs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>66. Insufficient LMs TM training</li> <li>67. Sufficient LMs TM training.</li> </ol> <p>B.2.5 Rationale for extent of involvement of LMs in talent development</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>68. Enhance effectiveness on talent development process</li> </ol> <p><b>B3 Performance Management</b></p> <p>B.3.1 LMs initiated performance management</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>37. LMs drew performance contracts</li> </ol> <p>B.3.2 LMs propose performance management decisions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>50. LMs appraise employees</li> <li>51. Performance ratings disagreements</li> <li>52. Performance disagreements resolved at LMs level -dialogue</li> <li>53. Performance disagreement resolved through LMs withdraw</li> <li>54. Performance disagreements resolved at director level-dialogue</li> <li>55. Motivations behind escalating grievance above</li> <li>56. HRPP, promotions, merit pay.</li> </ol> <p>B.4.3 Rationale for the extent of LMs involvement in performance Management</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>71. Enhance effectiveness of the PMS process</li> <li>72. Provide checks and balances on LMs</li> </ol> <p><b>B4 TM Budget</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>57. LMs proposed talent development budget</li> <li>58. LMs monitored talent development budget</li> </ol> <p><b>B5 Nature of involvement of LMs in TM</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>73. Flexible LMs' involvement in TM</li> <li>74. Inflexible LMs involvement in TM</li> </ol> <p><b>B6 Alignment of core and TM tasks</b></p> <p>B.7.1 LMs used prioritisation to align TM and Cores tasks</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>75. LMs prioritised core over TM tasks</li> <li>76. LMs lack TM knowledge results in focusing on core tasks</li> <li>77. LMs were possessed on core tasks</li> <li>78. Lack of strict submission deadline for TM assignment</li> <li>79. Shortage of human resource</li> <li>80. LMs prioritised TM over core tasks</li> <li>81. LMs prioritise TM to respect HRD submission deadline</li> <li>82. LMs prioritisation of TM eases workload</li> <li>83. LMs align TM and Core tasks using delegation</li> <li>84. LMs align TM and Core tasks using time Management.</li> </ol> <p><b>Theme C: Inconsistence between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM due to contextual factors</b></p> <p><b>C1 External contextual factors</b></p> <p>C.1.1 Politics- Low leadership independence</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>99. Politics-rationale for low leadership independence</li> <li>100. Compromised acquisition of TM expertise by LMs</li> <li>101. Compromised involvement of LMs in talent development</li> <li>102. Compromised involvement of LMs in performance management</li> <li>103. Compromised involvement of LMs in promotion</li> </ol> <p>C.1.2 COVID-19</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>104. LMs failure to participate in performance management due to COVID-19</li> <li>105. LMs failure to participate in talent development due to COVID-19</li> <li>106. LMs failure to participate in talent acquisition and identification due to COVID-19</li> <li>107. LMs failure to acquire TM expertise due to COVID-19.</li> </ol> <p>C.1.3 Legal Instruments</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>108. LMs rationalisation of TM roles in line with employment legal instruments</li> </ol> <p><b>C2 Internal contextual factors</b></p> <p>C.2.1 Disposition of TM stakeholders</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>85. lack of TM ownership by LMs -TM is HRD work</li> <li>86. LMs lack of TM knowledge</li> <li>87. Weak linkage between TM tasks and performance contract</li> <li>88. Office politics (gossip)</li> <li>89. Unilateral TM decision making by HODs</li> </ol> <p>C.2.2 Resource constraints</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90. Financial constraints</li> <li>91. Shortage of staff and workloads</li> </ol> <p>C.2.3 Case Study Organisation's Bureaucracy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>92. Conservatism and strict adherence to rules</li> <li>93. Unilateral decisions on staff movements by authorities</li> <li>94. LMs' Lack of empowerment. to make decisions</li> </ol> <p>C.2.4 TM stakeholders support towards TM programme</p> <p>C.2.4.1 Internal TM stakeholders' support</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>95. Availability of TM budget</li> <li>96. Availability of performance management system</li> <li>97. Availability of LMs TM training</li> </ol> <p>C.2.4.2 External TM stakeholders support</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>98. Government and International Partners' Capacity building Support - Government, IMF, World Bank</li> </ol>
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While writing the findings report, the assertions put forth were substantiated by quotes from participants. These quotes were extracted from codes corresponding to the initial, candidate, and final themes relevant to the claim. NVIVO software aided in efficiently organising the coded data, enabling the retrieval and comparison of pertinent quotes from the corresponding code, initial themes, candidate themes and final themes. Thus, the final chapters included quotes that were carefully selected to represent the diverse perspectives and experiences shared by the interview participants. The selection process involved identifying quotes that strongly resonated with the themes and concepts identified during the reflexive thematic analysis process. These quotes were then reviewed within the overall narrative context of the research to ensure coherence and relevance to the study's objectives. Quotes that best exemplified the richness and complexity of the data, capturing a breadth of viewpoints, were prioritised for inclusion. Yet, while ensuring that the quotes selected best captured the breath of viewpoints, efforts were made to ensure representativeness of the stakeholders' views. To ensure the quotes were representative of diverse perspectives, I first classified participants based on relevant factors such as their stakeholder category, years of experience in the CSO, and other pertinent demographic characteristics. I then analysed the distribution of quotes across these different participant categories. This allowed me to verify that no major viewpoints or groups were inadvertently omitted or underrepresented in the selected quotes included in the finding's chapters. For instance, regarding the assertion that LMs recommend staff for promotion to critical roles, various quotes from diverse stakeholders were reviewed and compared to support the claim as provided below.

*“So that work is done by the line manager without the recommendations from line managers there would be no promotions” (HRP1)*

*“With the guidance provided, I recommended one person to the Director, and it took some time almost a month that's when I noted that the name of the person, I recommended was the one that was promoted to the position” (LM4)*

**“The promotions in the CSO the way they have been done is that recommendations they come from the managers they look at the team and then make recommendations to Director and HR and the HR does promotions, so the role mainly is to make the recommendations (SP2)**

*“And when you ask your line manager, he would just tell you that I proposed your name, but I don't know what actually happened may be the Director can be in better position to respond to your issue” (OF4)*

*“When I want to present promotions, I normally go down to my line managers, ‘it’s you who are working daily with these people, can you make proposals for me?’ , so they do those proposals”*  
(SM2)

*“Line Managers shall recommend names of members of staff to be considered for promotion to the Director who will forward to human resources department”* (Doc 24)

After careful consideration of all quotes from diverse stakeholders, I opted for the quote from SP2 as it best encapsulated the perspectives of different stakeholders and document analysis on the claim advanced. Furthermore, this quote offered some insight into the promotion procedure. Ultimately, this quote was used in the study findings report.

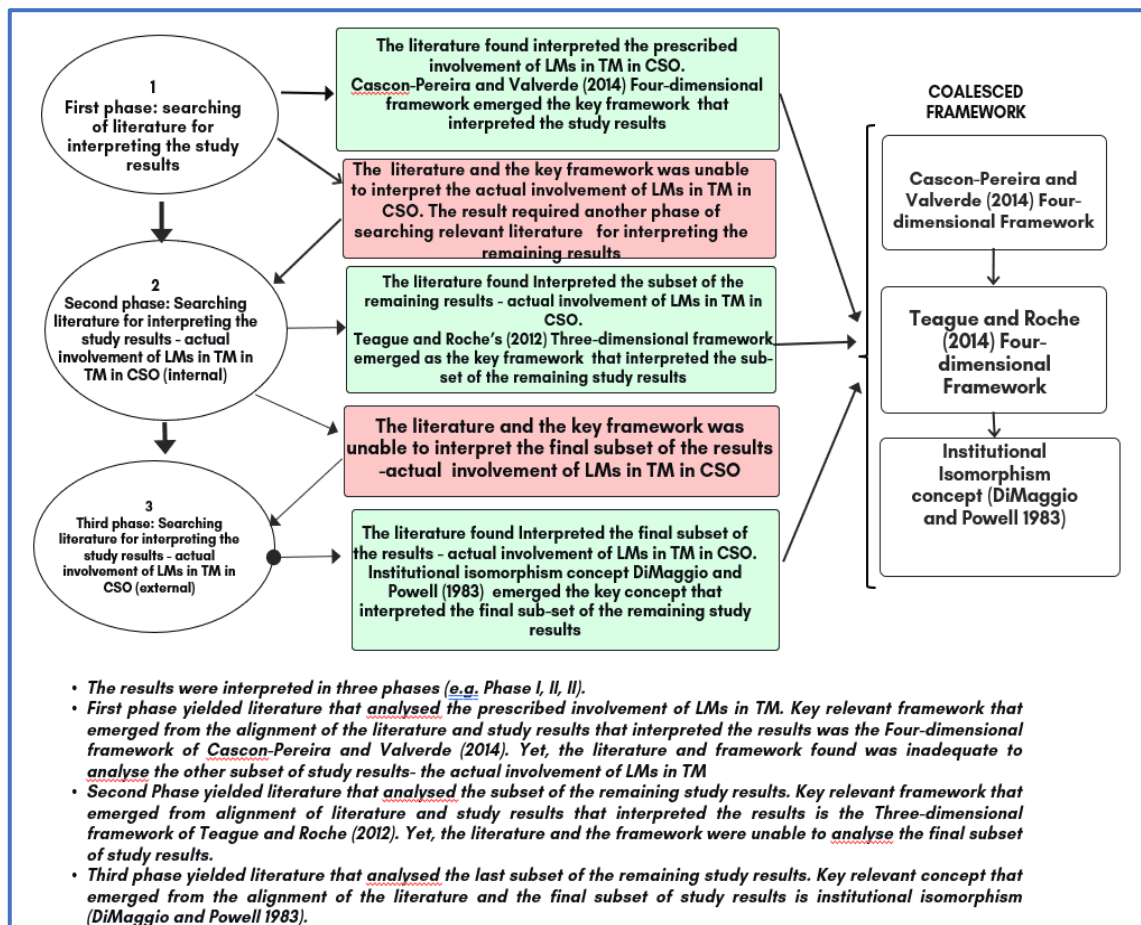
Drawing on the analysis outlined in the previous sections, it can be concluded that the analysis process was guided by reflexive thematic analysis and comprised five key stages. First, 47 interviews were transcribed verbatim and read repeatedly for familiarity. Second, with the research questions in mind, the 47 transcripts underwent a coding process, systematically coding sentences and phrases that addressed the research questions or provided interesting information related to them, yielding 108 codes. Third, the codes that shared common patterns were collated and grouped into clusters called "initial themes", achieved by comparing empirical evidence for each generated code against the code's definition, resulting in consolidating 108 codes into 33 initial themes. Fourth, 33 initial themes were further reviewed to ensure they matched with the empirical data and had no underlying shared patterns, consequently, initial themes that overlapped with other initial themes and shared the strongest underlying patterns were clustered together to generate 12 candidate themes. Fifth, the candidate themes were reviewed to identify other common patterns between them, and candidate themes that had "a central organising idea that captured a meaningful pattern across the dataset, as well as different manifestations of that pattern", were promoted to a theme, thus leading to the consolidation of 12 candidate themes into 6 developed themes and 3 themes. Accordingly, through an iterative process of reflexive thematic analysis comprising coding, categorising, and synthesizing, key insights were extracted from the data to form the basis of study's findings, providing a nuanced understanding of the research topic.



## 4.10 Process for interpreting the results and generating a coalesced framework

The study utilised a recursive process to interpret its results. Initially, a literature search explained the prescribed involvement of LMs in the TM dimension. The FDF framework emerged from this alignment, explaining this subset of the results. However, the rest of the results remained uninterpreted, leading to a second literature search. The TDF framework then provided insight into the difference between actual and prescribed involvement. Even still, a portion of the results remained unexplained, leading to a third literature search. Finally, the concept of institutional isomorphism emerged from this alignment, offering an explanation (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Overall, the exercise resulted in a coalesced framework analysing the involvement of LMs in TM in CSO. Details of the findings and their interpretations are provided in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Figure 11 below provides details of the analysis process for interpreting the results.

**Figure 10: Process for interpreting the results and generating a coalesced framework**



#### **4.11 Ethical issues considered in the study.**

In June 2020, I obtained approval from the University Ethics Committee following their protocols, as indicated in Appendix IH – Ethics Approval document. Prior to conducting interviews, participants received an information sheet to make an informed decision about participating. They also signed a Consent Form (see Appendix IB) to confirm their understanding and voluntary consent for the interviews and recording. Interviews were recorded with a digital recorder, and the files were anonymised and securely transferred to password-protected devices. Some files were transcribed and deleted in the presence of participants, as agreed. All data were anonymised, and only the research team had access during analysis and write-up, ensuring data confidentiality as per data protection regulations.

#### **4.12 Reflexivity for the study**

Reflexivity, as described by Berger (2015:220), involves “the researcher examining their own position within the research and acknowledging the potential impact it may have on various aspects of the study, such as the setting, the individuals being studied, the questions being asked, the data being collected, and its interpretation”. The purpose of reflexivity in qualitative research is to ensure the study’s rigour and trustworthiness (Teh and Lek 2018). It recognises that the researcher, being a part of the social world under investigation, possesses prior knowledge of the subject matter and a connection with the context being studied. These factors can potentially influence the quality of the data and, consequently, the entire study (Cohen *et al* 2000; Berger 2015). To guarantee the rigour and trustworthiness of the qualitative study, Berger (2015:220) recommends that researchers engage in reflexivity by focusing on self-knowledge and sensitivity, gaining a better understanding of how their own perspectives shape knowledge creation, vigilantly monitoring the impact of their biases, beliefs and personal experiences on their research, and striking a balance between the personal and the universal.

In line with Berger’s (2015) guidelines on reflexivity and the study’s context, it is important to disclose that during the early stages of my doctoral studies, I recognised the influence of my background knowledge in human resource management and my strong aspirations to advance in this field. I acknowledged that these factors could potentially impact the rigour and value of the study. The genesis of my desire to pursue a PhD in HRM can be traced back twenty-seven years, when I had the privilege of hearing my uncle share



stories about his job with my aunt. He worked as a Senior Personnel Officer in a statutory organisation in Malawi. Essentially, his role involved managing employee affairs and aligning their efforts with the organisation's objectives. Through his stories, it became evident that he considered his job highly important for both employees and the organisation. Moreover, despite occasional stress, he expressed great satisfaction with his work.

As I grew older, my fascination with my uncle's profession grew. During my secondary school years, my understanding deepened, allowing me to grasp his profession at a substantial level. This growing interest played a significant role in my decision to pursue a BA in HRM and eventually continue to a master's degree in the same field. Furthermore, my enthusiasm for this profession skyrocketed when I gained firsthand experience in the practical aspects while working in the human resources department of the CSO. This exposure solidified my interest.

Although I enjoyed my job, there were instances when I faced challenges due to a lack of advanced knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, HRM professionals worldwide, especially in Malawi, are grappling with TM issues. Given my long-standing passion, I aspire to be part of a team that addresses these problems through high-level academic research in the field. However, I realised that conducting such research successfully requires advanced research, analytical and writing skills, along with in-depth knowledge of the subject matter.

Considering all these factors, I felt compelled to pursue a PhD in HRM as it aligns with my passion and educational background and provides the means to achieve my career aspirations. From the outset of the doctoral studies, I recognised that my background knowledge in HRM and my strong desire for advancement in the field could greatly impact the rigour and worthiness of the study.

Second, it is worth disclosing that the study was carried out within the organisation where I am employed. This setting rendered the objectivity and credibility of the research susceptible to compromise, due to my familiarity with the organisation. This is because there is a fine line between a being researcher and an employee, particularly during the data collection stage of the research process. Similarly, it was also clear to me at the beginning of my doctoral studies that this situation had the potential to affect the rigour and value of the study.

To address the aforementioned challenges, I took specific measures to maintain my role as a researcher throughout the research process. Firstly, I employed awareness strategies, such as refraining from engaging in debates with interviewees during data collection, to prevent the expression of my personal opinions on the subject matter (Haynes 2012). Additionally, I ensured that all participants were fully informed and understood the objective of the study prior to conducting the interviews (Usi 2022), as provided in section 4.8.5. It was also essential to clarify to the participants before the interview sessions that my role was that of a researcher, not an employee of the CSO. During the interview sessions, I consistently reminded the respondents about my role as a researcher and the aim of the study whenever any issues arose that could potentially compromise the quality of the collected data. Moreover, my supervisory team played a crucial role in supporting me throughout the challenges by critically reviewing my work during the PhD programme. Lastly, I diligently adhered to the ethical obligations approved by the university's Ethics Committee.

An example that highlights the need for maintaining my role as a researcher occurred during one of the interview sessions. A participant attempted to engage me in a debate regarding the CSO's status in relation to the government, potentially leading me to express my personal opinion. Similarly, some participants assumed that my employment in the CSO's human resource department, coupled with my bachelor's and master's degrees in HRM, rendered their input unnecessary for the completion of my PhD thesis. I effectively addressed these challenges by politely reminding all participants, including the aforementioned individual, of the study's purpose and my role as an impartial researcher, such that my opinions on the subject matter should not be expressed.

Besides, the supervisory team played a very big important role in positioning me in the researcher's domain from the very beginning to the completion of the PhD programme. One notable contribution was their thorough review of my data collection tools, which helped me develop robust instruments focused on the specific phenomenon under study and capable of mitigating any potential bias during data collection. Moreover, whenever I encountered difficulties during data collection, I sought advice from the supervisory team. For instance, I faced a situation where a senior manager, who had initially agreed to participate in interviews, unexpectedly went on furlough and later resigned. Upon informing my supervisory team about this, they advised me against interviewing him due to ethical concerns. I followed their guidance and refrained from including him in the study.

Additionally, as part of the data collection process, I would diligently listen to the interview recordings each evening at the guesthouse. My supervisory team recommended this practice as a way to reflect on the interviews and identify areas for improvement before moving forward with the following interviews. This approach helped me internalise the interview questions to the extent that, by the time I reached the seventh participant, I had all the questions memorised. Consequently, this helped me to reduce my nervousness, which in turn ensured the interviews went smoothly and ultimately enhanced their quality. Furthermore, following data collection, the supervisory team critically reviewed every step of the data analysis process. They provided invaluable input in areas such as coding, developing initial themes, identifying candidate themes, refining final themes, structuring the analysis, presenting the results and generating a coalesced framework. They also provided valuable review in writing the final report, ensuring a comprehensive and rigorous analysis.

Concerning the fear and anxiety caused by the COVID-19 pandemic during data collection, Section 4.8.5 provides detailed information on how these were alleviated to avoid compromising the quality of the data collected, which in turn could compromise the reliability and rigour of the study.

#### **4.13 Research Validity, Reliability, Credibility, Transferability and Authenticity**

Empirical studies must address issues of validity, reliability, credibility, transferability and authenticity, in order to be considered credible and rigorous (Bryman and Bell 2011; Saunders et al 2012; Yin 2014). Similarly, the study was conducted in accordance with the said research protocols.

Validity refers to how accurately data collected reflects the phenomenon being studied (Hussey and Hussey 1997; Yin 2014). To achieve validity, the study used multiple data sources, including one-on-one semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders at various levels (e.g. human resource department staff, SM, officers, supervisors, LMs and SRC), along with document analysis (Denzin 1978:61; Robson 2011; Yin 2014; Zhang 2014; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2015:130; Creswell and Clark 2018; Kotlyar 2018; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018). The study also ensured that interview questions were aligned with the study's aim and were well-formulated (Rowley 2002:113; Yin 2014:119). Finally, I positioned myself in the researcher's domain, so that my background knowledge in the

subject area and proximity to the case under study did not affect the quality of the data collected, as explained in detail in Section 4.12.

Reliability in qualitative study refers to “the degree to which the features of the study’s design are congruent with the research inquiries” (Bryman and Bell, 2011:33). It aims to minimise errors and biases in a study (Yin 2014:49). To ensure reliability, the study used an interview guide to ask participants the same interview questions as per Appendix IA (Bourgeois and Eisenhardt, 1988; Bryman, 2004:28; Yin, 2014). Additionally, the entire data analysis process was transparent and documented step by step (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde, 2014; Yin, 2014).

Concerning credibility, efforts were made to ensure that each step of the study was critically reviewed by the supervisory team before proceeding to the next stage (Remenyi *et al.*, 1998). A case in point is that, during the PhD journey, draft chapters of the thesis were shared with the supervisory team for critical review and feedback. This was utilised to enhance the chapter drafts and create a cohesive research narrative. Additionally, the supervisory team offered continuous review and support throughout the process, as explained in sections 4.8.5 and 4.12.

Transferability, also known as external validity, refers to the extent to which research results can be generalised or applied to other organisations (Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Yin 2014). The study’s primary goal was to gain an in-depth understanding of LMs’ involvement in TM in the context of the CSO. While not aiming to generalise the results (Lewis *et al.*, 2003), the study detailed a step-by-step process that led to an in-depth understanding of LMs’ involvement in TM in the CSO. The process included: critical review of existing literature to unearth the knowledge gap; identification of suitable research design and methodology to fill the gap; and discussion of research findings. Consequently, scholars and organisations may assess whether their situation might be informed by the study results and the protocols that guided the study (Symon and Cassell 2012:2007).

Finally, to ensure authenticity, the following measures were taken. First, I ensured that the study fully complied with the standard design and methods for conducting credible research (Yin 2014; Saunders *et al.*, 2016). This involved unearthing research gaps within the existing mainstream literature; formulating research questions; thinking through the appropriate way to answer the questions; sample participants; conducting interviews; and

analysing and discussing the findings to identify the contributions. Second, a diary was kept capturing ideas, reflections and key points throughout the doctoral journey (Yin 2014). Regular supervisory meetings were held to allow critical review of my conduct and work, and to ensure that the study truly reflected the perspectives of the participants.

#### **4.14 Chapter Summary**

The chapter comprehensively described a suitable strategy to advance the current knowledge on the involvement of LMs in TM by conducting a study in the context of the CSO. Accordingly, elements of the research methodology were examined to identify suitable approaches to guide the present study. Thereafter, the study adopted an interpretivist research philosophy, supported by a qualitative research type and an inductive approach. Consistent with this latter, the study used one-on-one semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data. Document analysis was used to enhance the interviews. To make sense of the data collected, the study was guided by a reflexive thematic analysis, the process of which led to the development of three themes. Aware that the study involved people deserving of dignity and confidentiality, the study discussed the ethical issues that were considered. Finally, the chapter assessed the quality of the study by highlighting measures taken to achieve validity and reliability.

The subsequent chapters focus on presenting and discussing the study results in line with the generated themes.

# **Chapter 5: Management of Talents using Hybrid Talent Management Philosophy**

## **5.1 Introduction**

This and the two subsequent chapters are intended to present and discuss the findings of the study. However, before doing so, it is important to emphasise that the study examined the way in which LMs are involved in TM in the CSO. Consistent with the aim of the study, the following research questions facilitated its achievement: (1) How is talent understood and managed through the lens of TM philosophy? (2) How are LMs involved in TM? (3) Which factors preclude or facilitate LMs' involvement in TM? Based on the research questions, the study generated three themes from the interview data, namely: (1) management of talents using hybrid TM philosophy; (2) LMs initiate, propose and implement TM decisions and acquire TM expertise; and (3) inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM due to contextual factors. The three separate chapters, therefore, present and discuss research results in line with each generated theme.

### ***RQ1. How is talent understood and managed through the lens of TM philosophy?***

In line with the first research question, the study generated the theme “management of talents using hybrid TM philosophy”. Key takeaways on the theme were, first, that the CSO had varied definitions of talent whose further analysis led to two definitions, namely: (1) talent as attributes possessed by people, with “tech-savvy” individuals dominating the attributes due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic; and (2) talent as a few elite employees who excelled in performance and who had the potential to repeat the same results in higher positions in the future. Second, both definitions of talent were perceived as flexible and shaped by two opposing forces (i.e. pressure to fulfil the CSO's mandate vs. non-profit making, lack of competition and state elements). Third, consistent with varied definitions of talent, the CSO adopted a hybrid TM philosophy that included an exclusive key position TM philosophy and an inclusive self-initiated talent-development TM philosophy to manage a few elite employees and non-elite employees, respectively. Therefore, this chapter (Chapter 5) focuses on unpacking the theme in question. Nonetheless, the insights unearthed in this theme do not provide insights into how TM was implemented through the

lens of LMs. Thus, the next chapter (Chapter 6) addresses the deficiency by unwrapping the second theme generated in line with the second research question:

### ***RQ2. How are LMs involved in TM?***

Concerning the second research question, the study generated the theme “LMs initiate, propose and implement TM decisions and acquire TM expertise”. The key takeaways on the theme were: firstly, that LMs initiated TM processes, proposed TM decisions, implemented them in several TM practices (e.g. talent acquisition and identification, hybrid talent development, performance management and TM budget) and acquired TM expertise whose evaluation was neither effective nor ineffective. This suggests that overall, LMs were moderately involved in TM: neither less nor high. Similarly, overall, LMs were moderately involved in both the exclusive key position TM philosophy and the inclusive TM philosophy. This means that, according to TM philosophy, there were no differences in the level of LMs’ involvement.

The claim for moderate LMs’ involvement in TM is based on the combined results of their involvement in TM operational tasks, TM decision-making, TM budget and acquisition of TM expertise. Firstly, LMs were highly involved in TM operational tasks, as they performed several operational tasks (e.g. initiating TM processes and implementing TM decisions) in several TM practices. Secondly, LMs were moderately involved in decision-making, as they proposed decisions across TM practices. Thirdly, LMs had moderate financial power, as they proposed budgets for talent development. Finally, their involvement in acquiring TM expertise was moderate, as the training they attended received mixed reviews. Taken together, LMs’ high involvement in TM operational tasks was supported by moderate decision-making power, moderate financial power and moderate TM expertise, ultimately resulting in an overall moderate involvement in TM.

The above analysis follows Cascon-Pereira and Valverde’s (2014) Four-dimensional Framework (FDF) which assesses the overall extent of LMs’ involvement based on the combined four dimensions: operational tasks, decision-making, expertise acquisition, and budget allocation. For example, the framework guides that overall high involvement of LMs’ in TM results from their combined high involvement in operational tasks reflected in performing several operational tasks in several TM tasks, high involvement in TM budget reflected in LMs making decisions alone in TM budget and high involvement in the acquisition of TM expertise reflected in attending TM programme whose review is

adequate or effective or sufficient. In contrast, overall moderate LMs' involvement in TM results from their combined high involvement in operational tasks reflected in performing several operational tasks in several TM practices, moderate involvement in decision-making processes reflected in proposing decisions subject to approval, moderate involvement in budgeting reflected in proposing and implementing approved TM budgets and moderate involvement in acquiring TM expertise reflected in attending TM programmes with mixed reviews. On the flip side, low overall involvement of LMs in TM suggests combined high or minimal involvement of LMs in operational TM tasks, low involvement in decision making reflected in being excluded from such processes, restricted involvement in TM budget decisions, primarily limited to budget implementation and low and moderate involvement in acquiring TM expertise evident when the training attended is deemed ineffective or insufficient. (*for detailed discussion see Chapter 3; Section 3.3.1*). Table 4 below provide the criteria for determining the extent of LMs' involvement in TM based on Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) Four-dimensional framework.



**Table 4: The criteria for determining the extent of LMs' involvement in TM**

Extent of LMs' involvement in TM	Dimensions for determining the extent of involvement of LMs in TM	Factors for determining the extent of involvement of LMs in TM
<p><b>High involvement of LMs in TM</b>  <i>This is based on the combined extent of involvement of LMs in the four dimensions. High involvement in operational TM tasks combined with high involvement in TM decision making, high involvement in TM budget and acquisition of TM expertise whose review is sufficient/effective/adequate results in overall high involvement of LMs in TM.</i></p>	Operational TM tasks	<b>High involvement</b> (reflected in LMs performing several operational tasks in several TM practices)
	Decision Making	<b>High involvement</b> (reflected in LMs making decision on TM practices alone or in consultation with other stakeholders but having the final say)
	TM budget	<b>High involvement</b> (reflected in LMs making decisions on TM budget alone or in consultation with other stakeholders but having primary responsibility in the decision-making process)
	Acquisition of TM expertise	<b>High involvement</b> (reflected in LMs attending a TM programme whose review is adequate or sufficient or effective)
<p><b>Moderate involvement of LMs in TM</b>  <i>This is based on the combined extent of involvement of LMs in the four dimensions. Moderate involvement in operational TM tasks combined with high involvement in TM decision making, high involvement in TM budget and acquisition of TM expertise whose review is neither sufficient/effective/adequate nor inadequate/insufficient/ineffective results in overall moderate involvement of LMs in TM</i></p>	Operational TM tasks	<b>High involvement</b> (reflected in LMs performing several operational tasks in several TM practices)
	Decision Making	<b>Moderate involvement</b> (reflected in LMs making recommendations or consulted by HRD when making decisions)
	TM budget	<b>Moderate involvement</b> (reflected in LMs proposing TM budgets or consulted by HRD in making TM budget decisions)
	Acquisition of TM expertise	<b>Moderate involvement</b> (reflected in LMs attending a TM programme whose review is mixed -neither adequate/sufficient/effective nor inadequate/insufficient/ineffective)
<p><b>Low involvement of LMs in TM</b>  <i>This is based on the combined extent of involvement of LMs in the four dimensions. High or low involvement of LMs in operational TM tasks combined with low involvement in TM decision making, low involvement in TM budget and acquisition of TM expertise whose review is neither sufficient/effective/adequate nor inadequate/insufficient/ineffective or ineffective/insufficient results in overall low involvement of LMs in TM</i></p>	Operational TM tasks	<b>Low involvement</b> (reflected in LMs performing few operational TM tasks) <b>OR</b> <b>High involvement</b> (reflected in LMs performing more operational tasks in several TM practices)
	Decision Making	<b>Low involvement</b> (reflected in LMs excluded in TM decision making process or HRD making TM decisions alone)
	TM budget	<b>Low involvement</b> (reflected in LMs implementing and monitoring TM budgets)
	Acquisition of TM expertise	<b>Low involvement</b> (reflected in LMs not attending a TM programme or attending a programme whose review is inadequate/insufficient/ineffective)

However, consistent with the same analytical method, the results suggest that there were differences in the level of LMs' involvement per TM practices. LMs were less involved in talent acquisition and identification, and performance management practices, and moderately involved in talent development practice and TM budget process.

Secondly, the moderate involvement of LMs in TM was motivated by the CSO's quest to enhance TM effectiveness through LMs' knowledge of the workforce, due to the proximity they had to employees, which put them in an advantageous position. In addition, it was motivated by the desire of the CSO to ensure fairness in the process through checks and balances in the TM processes.

Thirdly, there were mixed perceptions as to whether the extent of LMs' involvement in TM would change in the future. Some expected the extent of involvement of LMs in TM to change due to the instability of the environment, while others did not expect any change due to the tendency of the CSO's bureaucracy to resist change.

Finally, LMs used common management strategies, namely prioritisation, delegation, and time management, to align core and TM tasks. Yet, LMs often prioritised core tasks over TM tasks, because they were tied to recognition such as promotions and merits. Thus, the subsequent chapter (Chapter 6) focuses on unpacking the theme in question. However, the insights uncovered in the two themes do not provide insights on the way in which contextual factors affected the involvement of LMs in TM. Thus, the results for the third research question are provided in the third theme in Chapter 7, addressing the deficiency.

### ***RQ3. Which factors preclude or facilitate LMs' involvement in TM?***

Regarding the last research question, the study generated a research theme: "the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM due to contextual factors". Key takeaways on this theme were: first, the interplay of politics manifested in low leadership independence; the COVID-19 pandemic; labour legislation; disposition of TM stakeholders; resource constraints; and the CSO's bureaucracy obstructed the involvement of LMs in TM, creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. Second, TM stakeholders support facilitated involvement of LMs in TM. Therefore, the final chapter (Chapter 7) focuses on unpacking the theme in question.

As indicated in the previous sections, this chapter focuses on the first theme, entitled management of talents using hybrid TM philosophy. The presentation of the theme is structured as follows: in the first section, varied definitions of talent and their characteristics are presented and discussed; the second section presents and discusses the hybrid TM philosophy adopted by the CSO.

## **5.2 Theme 1: Managing talents using hybrid TM philosophy.**

### **5.2.1 Varied talent definitions**

In line with Sparrow *et al.*'s (2011:11) contention that talent is subject to diverse interpretations, participants were questioned about their understanding of talent within the CSO context. Predictably, the study unveiled 12 separate interpretations of talent: (1) talent as a natural gift; (2) talent as basic required knowledge; (3) talent as “tech-savvy” skill; (4) talent as high-quality-relevant qualification; (5) talent as experience; (6) talent as innovative strength; (7) talent as the entire workforce; (8) talent as discretionary behaviour; (9) talent as adaptability; (10) talent as ability to transfer knowledge to work; (11) talent as high performers; and (12) talent as people with potential (refer to Appendix IIA, Table 5.1 for further detail). This spectrum of talent perspectives substantiates the findings of various researchers, who have identified multiple definitions of talent in their empirical studies (Cooke *et al.*, 2014: 228; Turner *et al.*, 2016: 57; Adebola 2017; Jamu 2017; Tawodzera 2018; Thanh *et al.*, 2020: 457).

Through the lenses of the subjective and objective talent definitions presented by Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* (2013), the 12 perspectives unearthed in the study could be distilled into two primary interpretations of talent within the CSO: (1) talents as the attributes employees bring; and (2) talents as a small group of elite employees with exceptional performance and potential.

#### **5.2.1.1 Talent as attributes employees possess**

In the initial set of talent definitions, specifically those encompassing perspectives 1-10, detailed in Appendix IIA - Table 5.2, talent was regarded as the qualities possessed by employees that allowed them to effectively carry out their responsibilities and make meaningful contributions towards achieving the objectives of the CSO. This viewpoint is supported by evidence from participants LM3, SP10 and document analysis, as demonstrated in the excerpts provided below:

*“Talent to me means ... **experience that an individual has** that he uses or contributes to his or her performance in their respective positions” (LM3).” (LM3)*

*“I look at talent as **skills and also experience that someone has**” (SP10)*

*“Eligibility for promotion shall be determined by basic entry requirements of the job such as **qualifications, experience ...**” (Doc23)*

However, upon closer examination of these definitions (1-10 Appendix IIA), it becomes evident that the diverse attributes align with all the subcategories of the objective talent definition: innate abilities, mastery, commitment and fit (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013). For instance, the definition of talent as an innate ability is supported by the excerpt that states: *“talent... entails their **innate or inborn capabilities**”* (SP4). Similarly, the definition of talent as mastery is exemplified by the passage that states: *“talent to me means ... **experience that an individual has** that he uses or contributes to his or her performance in their respective positions”* (LM3). Likewise, the definition of talent as commitment is demonstrated by the extract that asserts: *“talent is just those people... **capable of doing more ... they can apply themselves to do something more than what is basic within their area**”*(LM21). Lastly, the definition of talent as fit is substantiated by the extract which states: *“...talent not only those who have got may be **high potential** to perform at **higher levels** but also those people who can be easily **adapt** to the new situation”* (HRP2).

The findings therefore suggest that talent was viewed as qualities that employees possess, representing an inclusive and objective perspective on the concept of talent (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013:293). This implies that all individuals working in the CSO were regarded as talent, because they possessed certain qualities (such as diverse attributes) that empowered them to contribute to the CSO’s mission (Silzer and Church, 2009:7; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013:293; Cooke *et al.*, 2014: 228). This finding affirms the conclusions of multiple scholars whose research demonstrated that talent is viewed as attributes possessed by employees (Silzer and Dowell 2010:13; Wood *et al.* 2011:15; Marinakou, 2019; Marinakou and Giousmpasoglou, 2019).

However, among the attributes possessed by employees, “tech-savvy” skills emerged as the most-emphasised within the definition of talent (refer to Appendix IIA, Table 5.2). This shift can be attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the CSO, which necessitated operational changes to prevent the further spread of the virus. During a one-week rotation, some employees worked on-site, while the rest worked virtually. Consequently, the new arrangement required employees to adapt to virtual working, resulting in an increased demand for tech-savvy skills. This finding partially supports previous studies by several scholars (Bartik *et al.*, 2020; Haak-Saheem 2020:300; Aguinis and Burgi-Tian 2021:234), which observed that organisations modified their traditional work practices due to the pandemic. Yet, previous scholars’ studies (e.g. Bartik *et al.*, 2020; Haak-Saheem 2020:300; Aguinis and Burgi-Tian 2021:234) focused on the transition from office work to remote work, and none of them assessed the impact of the pandemic on employees’ talent requirements following this shift to home-based work. Therefore, our results provide additional insights into how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced employees’ talents, leading to the inclusion of tech-savvy skills in the CSO’s employees’ talent portfolio. It can be inferred that the previous research was conducted in a developed region and may not fully apply to the context of the CSO. Nonetheless, the increased demand for tech-savvy skills suggests that the CSO’s human resource department may have been under pressure to provide employees with technology-related skills and adapt them to new work practices (Pass and Ridgway 2022:255).

Similarly, the perspective of talent as experience people possess was highly emphasised by participants who regarded talent as attributes possessed by employees (see Appendix IIA: Table 5.2). This is evident from the excerpt from the interview with LM19.

*“ looking at ... **promotion...** and there are two individuals, most of the times **the star is not recognized**, it’s the other way round ... everybody looks at **you as talent** and when they want to recognise people they say no not this one because **their years of experience is less than that one** and then they recognise others **who have got an average performance because of years of experience**” (LM19).*

The reason behind the predominance of defining talent as experience employees possessed lies in the fact that CSOs’ TM decisions, especially regarding talent identification, were significantly influenced by experience, which refers to the number of years an individual has worked at the CSO. The CSO utilised specific criteria to identify talent, which encompassed performance, qualifications and experience. While all these factors influenced the outcomes of TM decisions, the factor of experience had a stronger impact

compared to the others. Consequently, in the decision-making process, a lower-performing employee with more years of experience was favoured over a higher-performing employee with less experience. This outcome indicates that talent was viewed as something that could be developed and mastered (Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* 2013; Meyers and Van Woerkom 2014). The finding partially supports Grant *et al.* (2020:917), who argued that in a state-owned organisation, performance may have a limited effect on TM decisions compared to other factors, due to the influence of state logic, which restricts the consideration of performance in TM efforts.

However, when examining the definitions of talent from the perspective of Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* (2013), it became apparent that talent within the CSO was also perceived as a small group of exceptional employees. In light of this, the following section offers additional elaboration and clarification.

#### **5.2.1.2 Talent as few elite employees with high performance and potential**

The second set of talent definitions, outlined in Appendix II-Table 5.2 and encompassing perspectives 11-12, considered talent to be limited to a select group of highly-accomplished employees who demonstrated exceptional performance and had the potential to thrive in more senior roles in the future. This is evidenced by the extracts provided below.

*“talent is defined as those people who really work hard to add significant value to the bank’s operations. ... Yes, we know all people can perform... talent is generally I think the ones who outperform the rest” (LM18)*

*“I understand that talent in relation to the CSO ... refers to those members of staff who have ...got potential to deliver the same outstanding performances in higher level jobs within the area of their profession” (HRP2)*

This means that although participants agreed that every employee had talent, based on their unique attributes and contributions to the organisation’s goals, they also recognized that employees’ level of performance varied. Some employees stood out with exceptional performance, making them crucial for achieving the organisation’s mission of ensuring price and financial stability for the country (Kabwe 2011; Thanh *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, these exceptional employees also demonstrated potential to excel in higher positions in the future. Therefore, perceiving talent as a select group of outstanding performers with the potential for further success refers to viewing talent in an exclusive subjective approach

(Ulrich and Smallwood 2012; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2013:295). This implies that only a few people within the CSO were considered talent (*ibid.*). This definition aligns with Golik *et al.* (2018:234), whose study shows that talents as achievers and talents as high potential indicate exclusivity.

However, upon conducting a more thorough examination of all the various talent definitions, considering the viewpoint of Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* (2013), it became apparent that the majority of these definitions encompassed elements from multiple categories of objective definitions and/or subjective talent definitions, as demonstrated by these excerpts.

*“Talent ...refers to those members of staff who have required qualifications... and have ability to transfer their knowledge into a consistent outstanding performance in their immediate positions and have got potential to deliver the same outstanding performances in higher-level jobs” (HRP2)*

*“Talent these are the trainings, skills, knowledge, and experience that one has acquired by working in the bank” (LM6)*

*“Talent ... is defined in terms of skills, knowledge ... one has which he/she uses consistently on his job to add value to the Bank’s mandate through the position he/she is placed” (OF4)*

*“Eligibility for promotion shall be determined by basic entry requirements of the job such as qualifications, experience ...” (Doc23)*

Although the CSO’s talent definitions align closely with Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*’s (2013) framework, the findings reveal that the majority of the CSO’s talent definitions span multiple definition categories, encompassing both the objective talent and the subjective talent definition category, or include elements from the subcategories of the objective talent definition. This finding mirrors the results of McDonnell *et al.*’s (2023) study, which also observed that most definitions extend across multiple definitional categories.

In accordance with the two perspectives on defining talent, an endeavour was made to outline the attributes of these definitions with regards to their level of flexibility. This encompasses determining whether the definitions are subject to future modifications or if they will remain unaltered.

### 5.2.1.3 Talent definition flexibility (will the definitions change in the future or not?)

Although there were two different views on how talent is defined (i.e. talent being the attributes individuals possess, and talent being a small group of exceptional employees with high performance), the study revealed that both perspectives described their definitions of talent as adaptable (i.e. they believed that the talent definitions provided would likely evolve in the future)

*“These **concepts are dynamic**, life keeps on **changing** so indeed if you are talking about **talent** today, the **elements** which contributes to talent later you may find that because of the improvements maybe in **technology** or in other aspects indeed talent can **change**. The definition can **change**” (HRP3)*

The participants in the study acknowledged that the definition of talent can be adaptable, primarily due to the dynamic nature of the CSO's environment. They recognised that any changes in the environment could influence how talent is perceived. Technological advancements, among other factors, were identified as catalysts for rethinking the concept of talent.

Initially, some participants who defined talent as an inherent gift held the opposite view, considering the CSO to be a bureaucratic institution with slow adaptability. However, they eventually acknowledged that their understanding of talent could evolve in the future. This change in perspective occurred when participants were asked about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their definition of talent. All participants, including those who viewed talent as an innate and inflexible attribute, admitted that the pandemic had influenced their definitions. This finding aligns with Swailes (2013:34), who described the definition of organisational talent as fluid, continuously adjusting to dynamic organisational priorities. Moreover, the results support Silzer and Dowell's (2010:13) argument that the combination of innate and learned characteristics in employees diminishes the distinction between innate and acquired attributes within organisations. Therefore, the study partially aligns with Biswas-Diener *et al.* (2011), who concluded that innate traits can be developed to some extent.



#### 5.2.1.4 Impact of the CSO context on talent definition (e.g., mandate of CSO vs public institution).

The research discovered that the CSO's pursuit of efficiency in fulfilling its responsibilities (i.e. ensuring the country's price and financial stability), along with its aim of maintaining its prestige and promoting consistent harmonisation of its operations on regional and international levels, influenced the definition of talent. This is evidenced by participants SP11, SP7 and document analysis:

*“Yes, they do because this is **a prestigious institution** even at SADC level...the expectations is that the people that are working there should have or **showcase some talent of certain level** in whatever they are doing” (SP11)*

*“The CSO need to properly define it because if it fails to define it properly then it **cannot achieve that mandate**” (SP7)*

*“The CSO's **mandate** is to ensure **price and financial stability of the country**” (Doc22)*

The CSO's commitment to efficiency in attaining its mandate and its objective of upholding its global standing and operational uniformity influenced the CSO to narrow the definition of talent to encompass only the qualities possessed by individuals, as well as performance and potential linked to the achievement of the organisation's mission. The discovery partially corresponds to the study conducted by McCracken *et al.* (2016:2742), wherein they identified that the conceptualisation of graduate talent pertained to skills that held significance for the business.

On the other hand, the presence of quasi-governmental forces shaped the CSO's approach to defining talent. One significant factor is the lack of a profit-making obligation, which allows the CSO to take a more relaxed stance when it comes to defining talent. This is evidenced by this extract from participant SM3:

*“our aim is **not to make profit** and some activities that the CSO does can make it **go into losses** and that wouldn't be interpreted as it has failed, no it has achieved so long it achieved the **issue of price stability.**”*

Another notable element is the lack of rivals, given that the CSO is the sole state-owned bank. Consequently, this results in a more relaxed approach when it comes to defining talent, as evidenced by participants OF3 and HRP4 below:

*“There is **only one CSO** in the country so we **don’t have competition** from organisations... so we might really **define the talent**, but we might **not really follow through** ... in terms of really sticking to that definition, because for us **we are not threatened** that if we don’t really deliver, we might be taken over by another organisation” (OF3)*

*“the way we define it is a bit different... other companies would look... at special talent and say what does **this person have**, what is it that **this person is going to improve in the organisation**... but for us it’s the basic specifics to say **what does the person have in terms of the qualifications... experience**” (HRP4)*

*“...The CSO is a **non-profit making organisation**...”(Doc22)*

As a result, the CSO’s perception of talent primarily focused on basic elements, such as what the person possessed in terms of experience and qualifications among others, rather than tangible considerations, such as the value they bring to fulfilling the CSO’s objectives.

The argument put forth by Meyers *et al.* (2020:556), that context determines the definition of talent, is supported by the interplay of the CSO’s two contrasting factors examined in this study. Specifically, the pressure on the CSO to achieve its mission contrasts with the relaxed attitude of public institutions. These opposing influences illustrate how the context of the CSO shapes the definition of talent, resulting in a specific understanding. When talent is defined as a combination of various attributes possessed by individuals, the CSO context restricts these attributes to those directly linked to fulfilling the organisation’s mandate. Similarly, when talent is defined as a select group of high-performing individuals with potential, the CSO context limits this definition to performance and potential that align with the organisation’s mission. These findings partially align with the study conducted by Sidani and Al Ariss (2014:217), which revealed that two conflicting forces – coercive and mimetic isomorphism – influenced the implementation of TM. While coercive pressure compelled organisations to comply with legal requirements that conflicted with TM endeavours, mimetic pressure still drove organisations to pursue and strive for optimal TM practices. Likewise, Thunnissen and Buttiens (2017:404) found that Dutch universities succumbed to mimetic pressures, resulting in the adoption of an exclusive TM.

### 5.2.1.5 Summary of varied talent definitions

To this end, the section discusses different viewpoints on the definition of talent, divided into two perspectives: (1) talent as employee attributes; and (2) talent as exceptional employees with potential for future high-level performance. Among attributes possessed by employees, being tech-savvy and having relevant experience were highlighted, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to remote work and increased need for technological skills. Experience was often considered a crucial factor in TM decisions. Both perspectives acknowledged the flexibility of the talent definition. Additionally, the CSO's pursuit of efficiency and alignment with objectives drove a refined definition, while its quasi-governmental status resulted in a more relaxed talent definition without the pressure to maximize profits. The study results and discussions on talent definitions are summarised in Table 4 below.

**Table 5: Summarised findings on talent definitions in the CSO**

No	Varied perspectives on talent definition	TM stakeholders					
		LM	HRD	OS	SM	SRC	Docs
1	Talent as attributes people possessed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	<i>Talent as tech-savvy featured high</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	<i>Talent as experience featured high</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
2	Talent as elite staff with outstanding performance and potential	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	Characteristics of talent definition <i>(Whether it will change or remain the same in the future)</i>						
	Flexible talent definition	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	Inflexible talent definition	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
4	Impact of context on talent definition <i>(efficiency forces vs public organisation forces)</i>						
	CSO's mandate influence talent definition	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
	CSO's quasi-government elements such as non-profit making attributes influenced talent definitions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

**Key for TM stakeholders:** LM →Line Manager, HRD →Human Resource Department Staff, OS →Other Staff (officers and Supervisors), SRC→Staff Representative Council, SM →Senior Management, Docs →Bank's documents; YES – stakeholder category mentioned the factor; NO- No stakeholder mentioned the factor

The previous section did not offer any information about the TM philosophies, perspectives or approaches utilised by the CSO for TM. The following section addresses this by presenting the specific TM philosophies employed by the CSO to manage its talents.

## **5.2.2 Hybrid TM philosophy (exclusive key position and inclusive self-initiated talent development TM philosophies)**

Stahl *et al.* (2012:26) found that numerous organisations adopted hybrid TM philosophy<sup>9</sup>. In line with this discovery, this study also identified a hybrid TM philosophy which combines exclusive key position TM philosophy (Thunnissen and Buttiens 2017:403) with an inclusive self-initiated talent development TM philosophy (Stahl 2012). The finding strengthens previous research that revealed a mix of exclusive and inclusive TM philosophies in public organisations (Kock and Burke, 2008; Glenn, 2012; Macfarlane *et al.*, 2012). The study also discovered that the CSO implemented this hybrid TM philosophy within their HRM policies and practices, as there was no specific TM scheme. This corroborates the findings of Cooke *et al.* (2014:231), who observed similar practices in firms based in China and India. Moreover, it supports the notion that TM programmes in public organisations are often inadequately developed (Culie *et al.*, 2014).

### **5.2.2.1 Exclusive key position TM philosophy (position of supervisor and above)**

The exclusive key position TM philosophy was implemented by giving special treatment to employees holding positions of supervisor, manager, director and senior manager, in contrast to those below supervisory level, such as senior officer, assistant, and auxiliary positions.

To put this TM philosophy into practice, several methods were utilised by the CSO. Firstly, talent development practices were employed to execute the CSO's agenda. This was evident in the CSO's postgraduate scholarship nomination process, which prioritised employees in supervisory positions and above, while employees at lower levels received less consideration. Furthermore, the CSO established supervisory and leadership development programmes (LDP) aimed at enhancing leadership skills specifically for employees in supervisory positions and above. Given that individuals in these roles were responsible for leading their subordinates to achieve the CSO's objectives of ensuring price.

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<sup>9</sup> The hybrid TM philosophy differs from the hybrid way of working, in that the former refers to managing talent through the combination of two or more TM philosophies; while the latter refers to the combination of working from home (virtually) and in the office.

*“There are several types of... training programmes like supervisory and leadership training programmes... provided to people who have the responsibility of looking after other staff and like supervisors, managers and executive management” (HRP1)*

*“Members of staff are hereby informed that the **First Phase of the Leadership Development Programme...** was successfully completed on 8th July 2016” (Doc7).*

This implies that the philosophy of prioritising key positions in TM was successfully implemented through the application of talent development practice.

Secondly, the CSO employed differentiated performance management systems (PMS) which impacted the perceptions of fairness. Specifically, employees in supervisory positions and above were evaluated through a 360-degree assessment process. This included self-assessment, reviews from subordinates, assessments from peers and evaluations from their supervisors. In contrast, employees who held roles below supervisor were evaluated using a 180-degree assessment system, consisting only of self-assessment and supervisor evaluations. This was evidenced by the participant OF2, whose extract is provided below:

*“there are two different templates of measuring the performance of staff in the CSO... starting from supervisors and above they had their own templates and in our case as officers we had our own template which only requires one appraiser to assess you ”*  
(OF2)

The findings suggest that CSO effectively implemented performance management as a means to put the exclusive key position TM philosophy into practice.

Finally, in order to enhance employee retention, the CSO allocated additional resources specifically towards initiatives aimed at retaining employees in supervisory roles and higher positions, rather than those in lower-level positions. An example of this was the provision of generous housing loan entitlements for employees in supervisory roles and above. Additionally, employees holding critical positions were given access to a CSO vehicle that received regular maintenance from the organisation, as stated by participant SP13:

*“I feel that people in the supervisory positions and above are treated as **special people...** their salaries are huge, their housing loan schemes entitlements are ... higher compared with the other staff and not only that, when one is promoted to the position of manager and above are entitled to a free new car which after some years becomes theirs ”* (SP13)

Furthermore, employees holding supervisory positions and higher were granted enhanced travel benefits. They had the flexibility to choose between air travel or using their personal vehicles, and they were eligible to claim mileage allowances. On the other hand, employees below the supervisory level were limited to public transportation when undertaking business trips, as stated below:

*“as a supervisor...you **receive attractive salaries, fuel allowances, and housing loan entitlements.** You can **use personal cars** for bank business within the country **with fuel covered** by the CSO. Managers receive **additional benefits, including free cars, beyond what supervisors receive.**” (SP11)*

*“For supervisors and above **mode of transport is either by air or own vehicle.** For employees below supervisor **mode of transport is coach**” (Doc4)*

This suggests that the CSO allocated additional resources to employees in key positions as a retention strategy, in order to implement the exclusive key position TM philosophy.

Overall, the findings indicate that employees in supervisory roles and higher positions were given preferential treatment. This was evident through their prioritisation for long-term training, utilisation of a comprehensive 360-degree performance management system and allocation of additional resources. The basis for this treatment was primarily the specific positions held within the organisation. Additionally, the study highlights the crucial role of talent development and performance management in implementing this practice for employees in these positions. The results suggest that the CSO utilised an exclusive key position TM philosophy, which involved providing special privileges to employees based on their positions (Collings and Mellahi, 2009:305-306). These findings support the claims made by McDonnell *et al.* (2017:118), that TM systems create significant wage disparities among employees in key positions. Furthermore, the CSO’s operationalisation of the exclusive key position TM philosophy aligns with Makela *et al.*’s (2010:135) recommended recipe for TM configuration, which emphasises the integration of TM with established performance management practices and investment in capacity building. Lastly, these results support Huselid’s (2011) suggestion that greater investment should be made in key positions that substantially contribute to achieving organisational goals, as against non-strategic positions.

These results validate a part of the exclusive key position TM philosophy. Nevertheless, the reasoning behind determining key positions within this philosophy is not completely elucidated by the study's findings. The following section, therefore, intends to address this gap.

The study found that the CSO's method for categorising employees by their roles was associated with the tasks these individuals, specifically those in supervisory roles and higher, were obliged to undertake. This arrangement permitted them to contribute strategically to the realisation of the CSO's mission of preserving the country's price and financial stability, a contrast to those employees in ranks below supervisor (McDonnell *et al.*, 2017:105). Firstly, the positions at the supervisory level and higher were deliberately structured with an added leadership element. This required the occupants of these roles to guide the rest of the workforce towards fulfilling the mission, as narrated by participant HRP2 in the following section:

*“... the positions of supervisor and above are considered **very strategic to the attainment of the CSO's mandate** ... all incumbents to these positions should be provided with ... **leadership development programme** to ... enable them to contribute effectively to the attainment of the CSO's mandate. So, if you ask what reason it could be, it all goes down to **strategic element associated** with these positions which makes them more critical to the mission of the Bank” (HRP2)*

The findings suggest that the presence of a leadership element within the roles of supervisors and higher-ranking individuals, as well as their capability to make strategic contributions to the CSO's mission, resulted in their positions being recognised as crucial within the CSO.

Secondly, the positions also involved a crucial aspect of high-risk decision-making. It was imperative for the individuals in these positions to make accurate choices, as any incorrect decisions might have significant repercussions as justified by participant SM2 in the excerpt below:

*“Each job ... has got its **own price** which is determined by **the contribution** it makes to the overall mandate of the CSO... certain positions have benefits that crop in... **attached to the type of risks** that jobs are taking when making **certain decisions** ...some jobs are **not decision-making**... So that **decision making process** has to be ... paid based on **the risks** because when anything goes wrong on that one you are to be **accountable and take the blame**” (SM2)*

This indicates that the presence of high-risk decision-making elements in supervisor and higher-level positions resulted in the identification of those positions as critical within the CSO.

Finally, these positions were associated with individuals who had prior experience working in the CSO, such as employees who had shown loyalty to the organisation. This experience was utilized to assist lower-level staff in achieving their goals. Moreover, supervisory roles and those higher in the hierarchy carried greater responsibilities compared to positions below them. Lastly, these supervisory positions and above were assigned non-routine tasks, setting them apart from lower-level positions.

Overall, the findings indicate that there is a valid rationale for considering positions of supervisors and above as key positions, based on three factors: (1) the inclusion of leadership responsibility; (2) the requirement for job holders to make high-risk decisions; and (3) the need for job holders to possess experience for effective performance. The results suggest that the CSO adopted an exclusive key position TM philosophy, as these factors align with the criteria used to determine key positions in exclusive key position TM (Huselid *et al.*, 2005; Mellahi and Collings 2009; Sparrow *et al.*, 2011). Huselid *et al.* (2005:3) and Sparrow *et al.* (2011:9) state that the exclusive key position TM philosophy is centred on identifying “A positions”. These are positions where job holders contribute significantly to the strategic mission of the organisation; where they are required to make strategic autonomous decisions with potentially serious consequences; and where performance-related remuneration is considered necessary. The key positions identified within the CSO also meet these criteria.

To this end, the findings demonstrated that the CSO employed differentiated TM practices to favour employees in supervisory positions and higher. These roles were deemed crucial due to their leadership responsibilities, strategic contributions and decision-making capabilities, among other factors. Consequently, the CSO embraced an exclusive strategic management approach focused on identifying pivotal positions that contribute significantly to the organisation’s performance. Subsequently, the CSO prioritised the selection of exceptionally qualified individuals to occupy these positions and utilised differentiated TM practices to effectively manage them (Collings and Mellahi, 2009:305-306; Adebola, 2017:50).



Nonetheless, some non-supervisory employees took a contrary view of the CSO's rationale for limiting the exclusive key position TM programme to supervisory positions and above, as narrated by participant OF5.

*“As the officer, you **are the one who drafts the job mostly**... they are **checking my work**, they are not doing the job anymore...and all that then it's going to go further to the manager or the director for signature and it's gone. So... **much of the job is done by an officer...the rest are pretty much just checking, proofreading**” (OF5)*

The argument presented by employees below the supervisory level is that they are the ones responsible for the majority of the challenging tasks at the CSO, rather than the supervisors. To illustrate, when financial institutions proposed a new product for CSO approval, it was the officers who assessed the proposal and drafted a response to the financial institution. The supervisors and managers merely reviewed the work completed by the officers. This finding partially supports research conducted by McDonnell *et al.* (2017:10), which revealed that the success of a top performer relied on input from a significant number of supporters (such as “B” or “C” players), and this situation could potentially create psychological tension, exacerbating perceived inequalities and injustices within the organisation. Such a dynamic could lead to a culture characterised by poor teamwork and a lack of collaborative spirit (Pfeffer, 2001; Mellahi and Collings, 2010; Cooke *et al.*, 2014).

#### **5.2.2.2 Mixed impacts of exclusive key position TM philosophy on employees in key position and non-key positions**

The study discovered that the exclusive key position TM philosophy had varying effects on staff. Initially, it was observed that this philosophy positively influenced the continuance commitment of employees in supervisory positions and higher roles. This resulted from the advantages offered by the CSO, including perks like complimentary cars, which may not be available in other organisations. Consequently, individuals holding these positions faced challenges in transitioning to other employers due to the fear of losing these unique benefits, as participant LM4 explained:

*“For instance, here in the CSO there over 50 managers and all those enjoy several benefits including **company vehicle which is bought and maintained by the CSO**... Like seriously who would **want to leave such things** and go out there and start looking for a car to purchase using your own resources when you are given a free car here, **so there are several things that holds us from leaving the Bank**” (LM4)*

The exclusive key position TM philosophy positively impacted the commitment of supervisory staff and higher positions. However, employees below supervisory roles perceived this approach as the root cause of their frustrations. They disliked the exclusive key position TM philosophy, because it impeded their chances of promotion. By prioritising the continuance contentment of employees in key positions, it created a situation where they were less likely to consider leaving the CSO, thereby limiting opportunities for upward mobility among lower-level employees. As a result, there was a delay in creating vacancies that could have allowed those employees below supervisory positions to advance within the CSO as noted by participant OF3 whose extract is provided below:

*“There are people ...on the same position they **are not rising** ...they feel demotivated. The problem is worsened by also **the benefits** that the supervisors, managers, Directors, and executive gets ... which also provides them with **comfort not to leave the CSO** ... to create opening for staff **in the lower positions** like us can get a chance of being **promoted but because they cannot get those benefits out there, they continue to work with the CSO**” (OF3).*

Moreover, the exclusive key position TM philosophy created a huge gap in salary and other benefits between them and those in supervisory positions and beyond, as narrated by participant SP13 below:

*“the biggest concern is the **huge gap** that exists between the people that are below supervisors and those from supervisors and above in terms **of salaries as well as benefits** ... for instance, **their salaries are huge, their housing loan schemes entitlements are much, much higher compared with the other staff**” (SP13).*

According to the findings, the implementation of the exclusive key position TM philosophy had detrimental effects on employees below supervisory roles, who expressed frustration at hindered career progression and a substantial wage disparity between themselves and their counterparts in supervisory positions and beyond.

Based on the overall findings, it becomes evident that the implementation of the exclusive key position TM philosophy resulted in mixed responses from employees. Supervisors and higher-ranking employees perceived it to be beneficial, as it enhanced their continuance commitment to the CSO. However, lower-level employees felt frustrated due to perceived unfairness. They believed that the limited access to development initiatives, inadequate support from managers, decreased motivation for career growth and overall dissatisfaction were unfair consequences of this practice (Wan *et al.*, 2012; Swailes and Blackburn 2016:122). Consequently, this could lead to negative work attitudes, increased

interpersonal conflicts and, ultimately, reduced job performance (Mahajan and Benson, 2013:723).

These findings demonstrate how the interplay between the exclusive key position TM philosophy and the cultural factors of high power distance, collectivism and egalitarian principles in the overall context of the CSO leads to conflicts and ethical concerns (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010; Swailes 2013:37; Agarwal 2016; Dongrey and Rokade, 2022). The conflicts arise because the CSO's context contradicts the principles of exclusivity advocated by the exclusive key position TM philosophy, leading to conflict (Collings and Mellahi 2009; Hofstede *et al.*, 2010; Agarwal 2016). The results presented in this study partially align with the earlier research conducted by Sarina and Wright (2015). Their study highlighted that the hybrid approach adopted by Qantas Group resulted in enhanced efficiency, but it also raised fairness concerns and resulted in reduced employee engagement (*ibid.*).

To this end, the previous section focused on the hybrid TM philosophy and its application to exclusive key positions within the CSO. It explored how the CSO implemented this philosophy through talent development, performance management and retention strategies to effectively manage their talent pool. The impact of this philosophy on employees holding key and non-key positions was also discussed. However, another TM philosophy, the inclusive self-initiated talent development TM philosophy, was identified in the study but has not yet been explored. The following paragraphs will delve deeper into this specific philosophy, to provide more understanding.

### **5.2.2.3 Inclusive self-initiated talent development TM philosophy**

The inclusive TM philosophy was demonstrated through a self-initiated capacity-building programme that assisted employees in advancing their career goals. The programme was accessible to all staff members and was not dependent on the outcomes of talent development needs analysis (TNA) (Schuler *et al.*, 2011; Stahl *et al.*, 2012). However, there were certain criteria that employees had to meet in order to participate: they could only pursue courses related to their line of work from the CSO's list of approved accredited institutions; and they were required to pass exams on their first attempt. For instance, an Accounting Officer could study for an accounting qualification, such as the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). The CSO provided various forms of support, such as financial assistance and time off, until the employee completed the programme.

This was exemplified by participant HRP2, who provided a detailed explanation of the programme:

*“...self-initiated training ... the CSO established to assist any member of staff who would want to advance his career ... **The programme allows members of staff to enrol with any institution that offers qualifications and pay all the required fees ... the programme that the member of staff pursues should be related to the job that he is doing... allows the member of staff to access study leave to prepare for examinations ...**” (HRP2).*

The findings indicate that the CSO had a proactive talent development programme in place, which catered to all employees seeking career growth and facilitated the implementation of an inclusive TM philosophy.

The programme had a profound effect on the career goals of employees, especially those in non-supervisory roles, by empowering them to attain crucial positions through promotion. The programme facilitated this by allowing employees to gain the necessary qualifications, which were one of the key requirements for advancement, in addition to their experience and performance. This was evidenced by the case of participant LM2, who started below a supervisory position but, after obtaining the relevant qualifications through the self-initiated talent development programme along with relevant experience and good performance, was promoted to a key position:

*“So when **I came to CSO, I saw an opportunity that I should do school, then I had to go ... for the ACCA and ...masters, ... fortunately the CSO it's a learning institution that since the way back people have been trained in different fields.... But suffice to say that ... I have survived in the bank because ... had I not embarked on school then I couldn't been at that position** (LM2).*

As a result, numerous employees participating in the self-initiated talent development programme were motivated to finish their studies in order to become eligible for promotions. They aimed to receive benefits comparable to those enjoyed by supervisory-level and higher-ranking employees, as indicated by participant OF4 in the extract below:

*“Currently, am doing Advanced Diploma .... I applied for CSO's support through self-initiated programme... **I have one year to go for me to finish the programme and I can't wait because that's the only requirement that is holding me from being promoted to supervisor position ... I really admire some of my colleagues whom we were together as officers but after attaining their qualifications they never stayed long to be promoted to supervisory positions and now they are enjoying a lot of money, benefits**” (OF4).*

The study's overall findings indicate that the self-initiated talent development programme had positive effects on employees, especially those in non-supervisory positions, by enabling them to acquire relevant qualifications essential for advancement to key roles. The results suggest that CSO embraced an inclusive TM philosophy. The programme's characteristics, such as being open to all employees, relevant to their line of work and not based on TNA results, align well with the core principles of inclusive TM philosophy. These principles focus on recognising employees' natural talents and supporting their development of job-specific skills and knowledge to achieve tangible success (Buckingham and Vosburgh 2001:22; Hasan 2016). In particular, it focuses on expanding employees' knowledge, skills and abilities (Meyers *et al.*, 2013:315; Adebola 2017:48).

By implementing this programme, the CSO not only optimised employees' long-term potential, but also ensured a steady supply of talent (Meyers *et al.*, 2013; Cooke *et al.*, 2014:230; Malik and Singh 2014:3; Hirsh 2015), mitigating the risks associated with relying internally solely on exclusive employees in crucial positions (Yost and Chang 2009:442) and externally on an uncertain labour market (Garavan *et al.*, 2012:5). These findings are consistent with the key principles of inclusive TM advocated by various authors (Buckingham and Vosburg 2001; Yost and Chang 2009; Malik and Singh 2014).

With regards to culture, the study provides partial support for the notion that an inclusive TM philosophy tends to flourish in organisations characterised by high power distance and collectivist cultures, similar to the CSO (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010; Agarwal 2016).

Upon closer examination of the findings and considering Malawian culture, particularly in relation to uncertainty avoidance and TM, a distinctive relationship emerges. Malawi's score of 50 on the Hofstede culture scale indicates a neutral stance regarding uncertainty avoidance. The research shows that the Malawian CSO follows a hybrid TM philosophy, which combines elements of both inclusive and exclusive key position TM philosophies. Typically, cultures with low uncertainty avoidance tend to favour an exclusive TM philosophy, while those with high uncertainty avoidance lean towards an inclusive TM philosophy (Hofstede 2011:10; Agarwal 2016:7). However, in the case of Malawi, where uncertainty avoidance is ambiguously positioned, it appears to adopt a hybrid TM philosophy that encompasses both inclusive self-initiated talent development and an exclusive key position TM philosophy.

#### **5.2.2.4 Summary of the hybrid TM philosophy**

To this end, the section discusses how the CSO employed a hybrid TM philosophy, comprising two approaches: an exclusive key position TM philosophy and an inclusive self-initiated talent development TM philosophy. These philosophies were integrated into the CSO's HRM policies and practices.

The exclusive key position TM philosophy focused on differentiated TM practices, such as talent development programmes for leadership and performance management through assessments (180 and 360 degrees). This approach was adopted due to the recognition that higher-level positions, particularly supervisory roles, involved critical decision-making with significant consequences for the CSO's mission of ensuring price and financial stability, leading subordinates and managing workloads. Yet, some employees below supervisory positions had a different perspective, arguing that lower-level positions actually involved more challenging work compared to those in supervisory positions and above.

The exclusive key position TM philosophy was well-received by supervisors and senior employees, as it strengthened their continuance commitment to the CSO. However, it led to frustration among employees below supervisory positions, who saw it as promoting inequality and limiting their chances of promotion. To address this issue, the CSO introduced a self-initiated capacity-building programme available to all employees, regardless of talent development needs analysis results. This programme received praise from all employees, particularly those below supervisory positions, as it offered a chance to enhance their skills and qualifications, making them eligible for promotion into key positions. This finding is significant, as it responds to the call by Kwon and Jang (2021:110) to examine the way in which inclusive TM philosophy is institutionalised in an exclusive TM philosophy within an organisation. The claim is based on the fact that the study has shown how the TM philosophy of inclusive self-initiated talent development is linked to TM philosophy of exclusive key position.

In view of the above, a summary of the results on the hybrid TM philosophy is given in Table 5 below.

**Table 6: Hybrid TM philosophy (exclusive key position and inclusive self-initiated TM philosophies)**

No	Hybrid TM Philosophy		TM stakeholders					
			LM	HR D	OS	SR C	SM	Doc s
1	Exclusive position TM philosophy	Differentiated talent development	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Differentiated performance management system	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		More resources were allocated to retention initiatives for employees in supervisory positions and above.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		The rationale for exclusive position TM philosophy- Supervisory position and above (leadership, risk, decision making)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Justifications against exclusive positions TM philosophy- officer positions (assessment of proposed products and workload)	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
		Impact of exclusive positions TM philosophy on employees in a supervisory position and above (e.g. enhance continuance commitment)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
		Impact of exclusive position TM philosophy on employees below supervisory positions (frustrations due to unfairness and inequality)	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
2	Inclusive self-initiated talent development	Self-initiated talent development for all employees	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Impact of inclusive talent development TM philosophy on both employees in supervisory positions and above, and below supervisory positions (e.g. enhanced motivation)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

*Key for TM stakeholders: LM→Line Manager, HRD →Human Resource Department Staff, OS →Other Staff (Officers and Supervisors), SRC →Staff Representative Council, SM →Senior Management, Docs →Bank 's documents; YES – stakeholder category mentioned factor; NO-No stakeholder mentioned the factor*

### 5.3 Chapter summary

Overall, the chapter unpacked the theme entitled “management of talents using hybrid TM philosophy”, which was based on the research question: How is talent understood and managed through the lens of TM philosophy? Thus, consistent with this theme, the chapter presented and discussed the following key findings: first, the CSO had varied talent definitions whose further analysis led to two definitions, namely: (1) talent as attributes people possessed, with “tech-savvy” traits predominating due to impacts of COVID-19; and (2) talent as a few elite employees whose performance was outstanding and had the potential to replicate the same results in higher positions in the future. Second, both definitions of talent were flexible and shaped by two opposing forces (i.e. pressure to attain

the CSO's mandate vs non-profit, lack of competition and state elements). Third, consistent with varied talent definitions, the CSO adopted a hybrid TM philosophy that included an exclusive position TM philosophy and an inclusive self-initiated talent development TM philosophy to manage a few elite employees and non-elite, respectively. Table 6 below provides a summary on the chapter's results and discussions based on the theme management of talents using hybrid TM philosophy.

**Table 7: Chapter summary on management of talents using hybrid TM philosophy**

A	Varied perspectives on talent definition		TM stakeholders					
			LM	HRD	OS	SRC	SM	Docs
1	Talent as attributes people possessed		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	<i>Talent as tech-savvy featured high</i>		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	<i>Talent as experience featured high</i>		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Talent as elite staff with outstanding performance and potential		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	Characteristics of talent definition <i>(whether it will change or remain the same in the future)</i>							
	Flexible talent definition		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Inflexible talent definition		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
4	Impact of context on talent definition <i>(efficiency forces vs public org. forces)</i>							
	CSO's mandate influences talent definition		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
	CSO's quasi-government elements such as non-profit making attributes influenced talent definitions		Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>B Hybrid TM Philosophy adopted by the CSO</b>								
1	Exclusive position TM philosophy	Differentiated talent development	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Differentiated performance management system	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		More resources are allocated to retention initiatives for supervisory positions and above.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		The rationale for exclusive position TM philosophy- Supervisory positions and above (leadership, risk, decision making)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Justifications against exclusive positions TM philosophy-include officer positions (assessment of proposed products and workload)	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
		Impact of exclusive positions TM philosophy on employees in a supervisory position and above (e.g. enhance continuance commitment)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
		Impact of exclusive position TM philosophy on employees below supervisory positions (frustrations due to unfairness and inequality)	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
2	Inclusive self-initiated talent development	Self-initiated talent development for all	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Impact of inclusive talent development TM philosophy on both employees in supervisory positions and above and below supervisory positions (e.g. enhanced motivation)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

**Key for TM stakeholders:** LM →Line Manager, HRD →Human Resource Department Staff, OS →Other Staff (Officers and Supervisors), SRC →Staff Representative Council, SM →Senior Management, Docs →Bank's documents; YES – stakeholder category mentioned the factor; NO- No stakeholder mentioned the factor.

However, the key findings discussed in line with the theme fell short in providing insight into the way in which TM was implemented through the lenses of LMs. Thus, the second



theme, titled “LMs initiate, propose, implement TM decisions and acquire TM expertise” in the following chapter (Chapter 6) is designed to address this deficiency.

## **Chapter 6: LMs Initiate, Propose and Implement TM Decisions and Acquire TM expertise.**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The preceding chapter (Chapter 5) presented and discussed research results for the research question how is talent understood and managed through the lens of TM philosophy? This was approached by unwrapping the theme titled “management of talents using hybrid TM philosophy” generated in line with the said research question. Key takeaways on the theme were that the CSO had diverse understandings of talent whose further analysis led to two understandings, namely: (1) talent as traits possessed by people with “tech-savvy” skills dominating the traits due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic; and (2) talent as a few elite employees whose performance was outstanding and had the potential to repeat the same results in higher positions in the future. In line with varied definitions of talent, the CSO adopted a hybrid TM philosophy that included an exclusive key position TM philosophy and an inclusive self-initiated talent development TM philosophy, to manage a few elite employees and non-elite employees, respectively. Yet, the findings fell short in providing insights into the way in which TM was implemented through the lenses of LMs.

This chapter, therefore, addresses the shortfall by presenting and discussing research findings for the second research question, how are LMs involved in TM? In particular, the chapter unwraps the theme titled “LMs initiate, propose and implement TM decisions and acquire TM expertise” generated in line with the said research question. The key takeaways on the theme were: firstly, that LMs initiated TM processes, proposed TM decisions, implemented them in several TM practices (e.g. talent acquisition and identification, hybrid talent development, performance management and TM budget) and acquired TM expertise whose evaluation was neither effective nor ineffective. This suggests that overall, LMs were moderately involved in TM: neither less nor high. Similarly, overall, LMs were moderately involved in both the exclusive key position TM philosophy and the inclusive TM philosophy. This means that, according to TM philosophy, there were no differences in the level of LMs’ involvement.

The claim for moderate LMs' involvement in TM is based on the combined results of their involvement in TM operational tasks, TM decision-making, TM budget and acquisition of TM expertise. Firstly, LMs were highly involved in TM operational tasks, as they performed several operational tasks (e.g. initiating TM processes and implementing TM decisions) in several TM practices. Secondly, LMs were moderately involved in decision-making, as they proposed decisions across TM practices. Thirdly, LMs had moderate financial power, as they proposed budgets for talent development. Finally, their involvement in acquiring TM expertise was moderate, as the training they attended received mixed reviews. Taken together, LMs' high involvement in TM operational tasks was supported by moderate decision-making power, moderate financial power and moderate TM expertise, ultimately resulting in an overall moderate involvement in TM.

The above analysis follows Cascon-Pereira and Valverde's (2014) Four-dimensional Framework (FDF) which assesses the overall extent of LMs' involvement based on the combined four dimensions: operational tasks, decision-making, expertise acquisition, and budget allocation. For example, the framework guides that overall moderate LMs' involvement in TM results from their combined high involvement in operational tasks reflected in performing several operational tasks, moderate involvement in decision-making processes reflected in proposing decisions subject to approval, moderate involvement in budgeting reflected in proposing and implementing approved budgets and moderate involvement in acquiring TM expertise reflected in attending TM programmes with mixed reviews. On the flip side, low overall involvement of LMs in TM suggests combined high or minimal involvement in operational tasks, low involvement in decision making reflected in being excluded from such processes, restricted involvement in TM budget decisions, primarily limited to budget implementation and moderate involvement in acquiring TM expertise evident when the attended training is deemed ineffective or insufficient. (*for detailed discussion see Chapter 3; Section 3.3.1*).

However, consistent with the same analytical method, the results suggest that there were differences in the level of LMs' involvement per TM practices. LMs were less involved in talent acquisition and identification, and performance management practices, and moderately involved in talent development practice and TM budget process.

Secondly, the moderate involvement of LMs in TM was motivated by the CSO's quest to enhance TM effectiveness through LMs' knowledge of the workforce due to the proximity they have to employees, which put them in an advantageous position. In addition, it was motivated by the desire of the CSO to ensure fairness in the process through checks and balances in the TM process.

Thirdly, there were mixed perceptions as to whether the extent of LMs' involvement in TM would change in the future. Some expected the extent of involvement of LMs in TM to change, due to the instability of the environment; while others did not expect any change, due to the CSO's bureaucracy that tended to resist change.

Finally, LMs used common management strategies, namely prioritization, delegation and time management to align core and TM tasks. However, LMs often prioritised core tasks.

## **6.2 Talent acquisition and identification process**

The study found that the CSO utilised recruitment and promotion practices to acquire and identify talents from both external and internal markets, respectively, in order to fill its key vacancies. This observation aligns with Meyers *et al.*'s (2013:314) argument that recruitment and talent identification processes provide the means of hiring and spotting external and internal talents, respectively.

### **6.2.1 Talent acquisition**

#### **6.2.1.1 LMs initiate the talent acquisition process (e.g. identify vacancy, draw up job description and formulate interview questions)**

The study found that LMs initiated the talent acquisition process by identifying vacant positions in their respective departments as stated below:

*“Like in my department, line managers are the ones **who identify gaps in their divisions, the gaps that are supposed to be filled**” (SM1).*

*“In liaison with the concerned heads of department, line managers shall; **(1) identify the number of vacancies for recruitment**” (Doc11)*

In addition, LMs drew up job descriptions for the vacant position as claimed by participant LM14 and document analysis below:

*“recruitment process, we are requested to draft the job descriptions that is required for the job, then that information is submitted to human resources” (LM14).*

*“...line managers shall ...(2) develop the job specifications, educational and other requirements of the candidate being sought” (Doc11)*

Finally, LMs formulated interview questions used for assessing candidates during selection interviews, as attested by participant SP2:

*“Whenever the CSO is **recruiting** ... let’s say they are recruiting someone... in accounting, they would inform the accounting department to assist with the questions to ask **during the interviews**, so the **managers in accounting ... are responsible for formulating the interview questions**”. (SP2)*

Overall, the findings indicate that LMs were involved in initiating the talent acquisition process by carrying out various tasks, such as identifying job vacancies, drawing up job descriptions and formulating interview questions. These tasks performed by LMs in the talent acquisition process are categorised as operational, rather than requiring decision-making (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Consequently, the results suggest a high level of LM involvement in operational tasks related to talent acquisition, as they performed several operational tasks in the practice (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014:157). This finding partially aligns with Hutchinson and Purcell (2010:364), whose study also observed the participation of LMs in all recruitment stages, including job description creation.

In contrast to Hutchinson and Purcell’s (2010:364) findings, which revealed the involvement of LMs in candidate shortlisting, this study found that LMs in the CSO were excluded from advertising and shortlisting processes, which were solely conducted by human resource department. Some participants expressed dissatisfaction with this exclusion, as they believed it led to the selection of the wrong candidates for interview, who eventually reached the final stage. This occurred because the human resource department sometimes faced difficulties in fully understanding the relevant alternative qualifications for certain vacant positions during the shortlisting phase. Consequently, participants believed that involving LMs in these activities could potentially resolve this issue, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of the process, as claimed by participant HRP2 and document analysis below:

*“The current involvement...it's not bad but... I think they should **be involved a little more in the process... review the shortlist... sometimes the human resource when doing the shortlisting overlook a certain qualification...so if they are involved, they might be able to say no though we indicated this qualification like in accounting, but this qualification is also relevant we can also get this person to be interviewed”** (HRP2).*

*“Final short-listing shall be conducted by the Manager, Human Resources and Director, Human Resources.” (Doc1)*

... and enhancing LMs' ownership of the process and cooperation with the recruited talent, as argued by participant LM21 below:

*“the advantage is that, **am actually able... to own the process and so if the person is identified, am part of the identification process ... I think it's more important when am involved in the process”** (LM 21)*

The findings regarding the exclusion of LMs from the shortlisting process emphasise the importance of involving LMs at all stages of talent acquisition to improve its effectiveness. By excluding LMs from the shortlisting stage, the “wrong” talents were selected, and it further discouraged LMs from taking ownership of the process, ultimately compromising its effectiveness. These findings support the argument that LMs' involvement enhances the talent acquisition process, because their proximity to employees, knowledge of job requirements, qualifications and competencies place them in a favourable position to contribute effectively to it (Ngugi 2016:21; Golik *et al.*, 2018:234; Blanco and Golik 2021).

Unexpectedly, human resource department stakeholders, who were responsible for designing TM programmes, were among the participants who voiced their concerns about the exclusion of LMs during the shortlisting process. It was perhaps surprising that the human resource department did not take steps to resolve these issues, especially considering their role as architects of the TM programmes. This situation arose because the CSO, as a public institution, adopted the state's bureaucratic approach to TM, which involved centralising practices like shortlisting. As a result, this hindered the human resource department's ability to address the bottleneck effectively, as explained by HRP1 in the excerpt below:

*“in many institutions... it's the line manager that recruits because it's their department ... but in the CSO ... we are a bit conservative but at the same time we are a public institution we tend to copy the government practices line of thinking where things are centralized...given a chance I think ... line manager would have been empowered to recruit” (HRP1)*

The failure of the HR department to address the issue of excluding LMs from participating in the shortlisting stage due to bureaucratic practices copied from the government demonstrates how bureaucracy hinders the full involvement of LMs in the process. In addition, the results indicate that the implementation of the talent acquisition process through the lens of LMs is influenced by mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). This is because the CSO, being a state bank, which depends on the state, believed that the best approach to implementing TM was to conform to the government's TM practices. As result, the copied TM approach resulted in excluding LMs from the shortlisting phase. The finding supports Mendzela's (2009:3) understanding that state banks are conservative and bureaucratic organisations. Besides, the results align with the research conducted by various scholars in public organisations, which identified bureaucratic elements such as centralisation, standardisation, procedural correctness and slow responsiveness to change (Conway and Monks 2010:370; Norris-Terrell and Clay, 2010; Macfarlane *et al.*, 2012:45).

#### **6.2.1.2 LMs propose talent acquisition decision (e.g. participate in selection interviews)**

Following the outcomes of the shortlisting process, the human resource department assembled an interview panel comprising a representative from human resource department and LMs specifically for the vacant position. During the interviews, human resource department primarily provided professional guidance and took care of administrative tasks. The LMs played a vital role by offering technical expertise to the panellists, ensuring a fair and unbiased evaluation of the candidates. Moreover, the panel recommended qualified candidates for employment to the executive management, as attested by participants HRP1 and document analysis below:

“... during selection interviews **the line manager is invited to be among the team that assesses the candidate’s suitability**” (SM1)

“... interview panels were constituted to conduct the interviews.... each panel comprised... Director (Chairperson), **two Managers** and a representative from Human Resources Department ... human resource department also provided secretarial services” (Doc13)

The findings indicate that LMs were active members of a panel responsible for evaluating and recommending suitable candidates for employment to executive management. In addition to their operational tasks, LMs also played a role in proposing decisions to the executive management team as part of the decision-making process (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Consequently, the results suggest that LMs had a moderate level of involvement in the decision-making process (Budhwar, 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde, 2014; Lopez-Cotarelo, 2018). The finding partially conflicts with Brewster *et al.* (2015:586), who found that LMs had decision-making authority in the talent acquisition process. Nevertheless, it aligns with Blayney *et al.* (2020:457), who found that LMs actively participated in the selection interview process alongside other panel members.

### **6.2.1.3 Summary of LMs’ involvement in talent acquisition (initiate and propose decisions)**

The preceding sections established that LMs initiated the talent acquisition process by identifying job vacancies, drawing up job descriptions and formulating interview questions. Moreover, LMs participated in selection interviews and made recommendations for hiring decisions. Yet, LMs were not involved in advertisement and shortlisting activities, as these were handled solely by the human resource department due to the CSO’s bureaucratic structure, inspired by government practices. Analysing results through the Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) Four-dimensional framework, which evaluates the extent of involvement across operational tasks, decision-making, TM budget, and TM expertise, suggests that LMs were involved primarily in operational tasks and decision-making of the process. Moreover, the results suggest that LMs were highly involved in operational tasks as they performed several operational tasks such as identifying job vacancies, drawing up job descriptions and formulating interview questions. Finally, the results suggest that LMs were moderately involved in decision making of the process as they were involved in recommending successful candidate for employment to executive



management. Table 7 presents a summary of LMs' involvement in the talent acquisition process including the extent of their involvement.

**Table 8: LMs' involvement in talent acquisition**

No	Activities undertaken by LMs in talent acquisition		TM stakeholders						Measurement of extent of involvement of LMs consistent with Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) Four-dimensional Framework (FDF).
			LM	HRD	OS	SM	SRC	Docs	
1	LMs initiated the talent acquisition process	Identified vacancy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	<i>The results suggests that LMs were involved in operational tasks and the extent of their involvement was high. This is because LMs performed several operational tasks such as initiating talent acquisition process</i>
		Drew job description	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
		Formulated interview questions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
2	Lack of LMs' involvement in shortlisting	Complaints about the lack of LMs' involvement in shortlisting	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	
		CSO' bureaucracy-reasons for lack of LMs' involvement in talent acquisition	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
3	LMs proposed decision for talent acquisition	LMs participated in selection interviews	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	<i>The results suggest that LMs were involved in decision making and the extent of their involvement was moderate. This is because LMs proposed decisions in talent acquisition.</i>

**Key for TM stakeholders:** LM →Line Manager, HRD →Human Resource Department Staff, OS →Other Staff (Officers and Supervisors), SRCPC →Staff Representative Council, SM →Senior Management, Docs →Bank's documents; YES – stakeholder category mentioned factor; NO-No stakeholder mentioned the factor

However, the study found that the CSO also identified internal talent through promotion to fill key vacancies. Thus, the subsequent section presents and discusses findings on talent identification.

## **6.2.2 Talent identification/promotion (LMs proposed employees for promotion)**

The study found that the CSO utilised a staff promotion procedure as a means to identify internal talent to fill its key vacancies (Thunnissen *et al.*, 2013a). Additionally, the study revealed that LMs evaluated and recommended employees for promotion into key positions in their respective divisions, as evidenced by participant SP2 and document analysis below:

*“The promotions in the CSO the way they have been done ... the managers they look at the team **and then make recommendations to Director and human resources and the HR does promotions, so the role mainly is to make the recommendations**”* (SP2).

*“Line Managers shall **recommend names of members of staff to be considered for promotion** to the Director who will forward to human resources department”* (Doc24)

The talent identification process carried out by LMs involves the task of recommending employees for promotion, which falls under the realm of decision-making (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). The results, therefore, suggest that the extent of LMs' involvement in the decision-making process was moderate, as their role was limited to proposing decisions to executive management for approval (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018). The finding confirms those of several scholars whose studies found that LMs recommended employees for promotions (Adebola 2017:178; Jokhio 2018:195; Cadigan *et al.*, 2020:186).

### **6.2.2.1 Criteria LMs used for talent identification/promotion (experience, qualification and performance)**

The LMs used three factors, namely experience in the CSO, performance and relevant qualifications, as the criteria to identify potential staff for promotion, as explained by participant OF4 and document analysis, extracts of which are provided below:

*“managers are requested to come up with proposals within his division of possible talents that can be promoted. However, the nominated talents should have justifications in terms **of performance, qualifications and years of service**”*. (OF4).

*“Eligibility for promotion shall be determined by basic entry requirements of the job such as **qualifications, experience and the individual's performance**”* (Doc23)

The results indicate that individuals who were eligible for promotion possessed the required qualifications and the required years of service in the CSO and demonstrated good performance. Upon closer examination of the talent identification criteria discovered in the study, it becomes evident that the factors included in the criteria align with some of the talent definitions provided in Chapter 5. This correspondence between talent definitions and identification criteria reinforces the argument made by Turner *et al.* (2016:58), that the implementation of TM, among other factors, depends on how talent is defined, as in this case with talent identification. The finding partially supports the conclusions of scholars who have found that performance is considered when identifying talent for promotion or inclusion in talent pools (Makela *et al.*, 2010:135; Wiblen *et al.*, 2012; García-Carbonell, *et al.*, 2015; Bratton and Watson 2018:25; Golik *et al.*, 2018:234; Cadigan *et al.*, 2020:186).

While all three factors had an impact on the promotion outcome, the study discovered that the degree of influence differed among the factors. Experience emerged as the most influential factor, as observed by LM19 below,

*“looking at ... promotion...when you consider talent and maybe there are two individuals, most of the times the star is not recognised, it's the other way round ... they recognise others who have got an average performance because of years of experience”*  
(LM19)

The findings indicate that experience is the most influential factor in talent identification criteria, particularly in the context of the CSO where a high-power distance culture is present. This culture places greater importance on non-merit factors, such as age, experience and seniority, when distinguishing individuals with power from those without. Consequently, the experience factor carries significant weight in the talent identification process within the CSO (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010; Agarwal 2016:6). Additionally, the results suggest that state logic plays a role in determining TM decisions, reducing the impact of performance as a factor (Grant *et al.*, 2020:917). Given that the CSO is a state bank and has adopted TM practices similar to those of the government, there is a possibility that it may harbour state logic, which influences TM decisions. Moreover, the results provide an explanation for why experience is commonly defined as a key attribute of talent, as observed in Chapter 5. It supports the notion that the definition of talent is closely tied to how it is managed. This aligns with previous research indicating that the definition and management of talent are interconnected (CIPD 2007:10; Turner *et al.*, 2016:58). Overall, these findings highlight the significant influence of the CSO's context, specifically the

presence of state attributes and a high power distance culture, on the talent identification process. However, it is important to note that these results contradict a study by Kotlayar *et al.*, (2018:62), which found that new graduates in a multinational food products company in Canada were promoted quickly, bypassing individuals with experience and tenure. This discrepancy can be attributed to the unique context of the CSO.

#### **6.2.2.2 HODs, Human Resource Department and SM review LMs' talent identification proposals**

The promotion proposals made by the LMs were not final decisions as they underwent thorough evaluation by department heads, the HR department and executive management. While LMs evaluated employees and recommended them for promotion into key vacancies within their departments, HR and senior management evaluated all eligible employees bank-wide for key positions. This resulted in some employees initially not proposed for promotion being selected for important roles, while others were promoted to different positions. Due to this process, there was a lack of transparency among LMs, who hesitated to disclose proposals to their subordinates for fear of raised expectations and potential frustration if they were not approved by executive management, as evidenced by SM4 in the excerpt provided below:

*“In terms of nominating them the concerned staff **are not made aware**... to manage people's expectations. What if that nomination is made and the manager **sits down with team to say I have proposed you for promotion and when its submitted to executive management and they say no**... How are we going to manage the staff who was told that **he is going to be considered for that promotion?**” (SM4)*

The examination of proposals from LMs, along with the lack of transparency in the talent identification process, confirms that LMs had a moderate level of involvement in decision-making. The ultimate responsibility for decisions lay with executive management, as they had the authority to accept or reject the proposals made by LMs. As a result, LMs were hesitant to share their proposals with their subordinates. On the other hand, the results indicate that the CSO had a system in place to monitor LMs' participation in TM, with the aim of ensuring fairness and objectivity in the process. This was achieved through scrutiny by higher authorities of the proposals made by LMs.

Consistent with the argument of Makela *et al.* (2010:135) regarding potential issues associated with promoting individuals to key positions, the study found that some qualified employees who met the promotion criteria were excluded, turning to LMs with their grievances. However, due to the lack of authority to address such complaints, LMs advised employees to submit their appeals to the head of the department for assistance, as stated by participant LM5 below:

*“As always after promotions my office receives complaints from those that have been left and what I do is to refer them to the director because I don’t have any powers to address their grievances. This is because that my duty on promotion is limited to recommending staff for promotion to the director”* (LM5)

LMs’ failure to address employee complaints on talent identification reveals the drawbacks of their moderate involvement in decision-making. This is because, once LMs propose solutions, they remain unaware of how the final decisions are made, as those decisions are taken by executive management. This is different from prior research, which showed that LMs effectively handled promotion complaints (Blanco and Golik 2021:33).

### **6.2.2.3 Summary of LMs’ involvement in talent identification (proposing decisions)**

The previous section discussed how promotion decisions for key positions were made by identifying internal talent. LM played a role in assessing and recommending employees for promotions. The main criteria for selecting suitable candidates included performance, qualifications and experience, with experience being the most significant factor. However, the final promotion proposals underwent further review by department heads, human resource department and executive management for approval. Due to the uncertainty of the outcome, LMs hesitated to share the proposals with concerned subordinates to avoid raising expectations that might lead to frustration if the proposals were not approved. Employees who were qualified but not selected for promotions expressed their frustrations and appealed to LMs. In such cases, LMs directed these employees to the heads of the department, as they lacked the authority to address these grievances.

The results revealed that LMs were involved in recommending employees for promotion. Analysis of the results using the Cascon-Pereira and Valverde’s (2014) Four-dimensional framework which assesses the extent of involvement across operational tasks, decision-making, TM budget, and TM expertise, suggests that LMs were primarily involved in decision-making. Moreover, the extent of LMs involvement in decision making dimension was moderate as they recommended employees for promotion which is part of

the decision-making process. Table 8 presents a summary of LMs' involvement in the talent identification including the extent of their involvement.

**Table 9: LMs' involvement in talent identification/promotion**

No	Activities undertaken by LMs in the promotion process		TM stakeholders						Measurement of extent of involvement of LMs consistent with Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) Four-dimensional Framework (FDF).
			LM	HRD	OS	SM	SRC	Docs	
1	LMs proposed decision in the promotion process	LMs proposed employees for promotion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	<i>The results suggest that LMs were involved in decision making and the extent of their involvement was moderate. This is because LMs proposed employees for promotions which is part of the decision making.</i>
		LMs identified staff for promotion using the criteria; (1) performance, (2) years of service, (3) qualifications	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
		Years of service had more influence on promotion outcome	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	
		LMs lack of transparency in the promotion process	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	
		LMs advised staff to appeal to the Director and some feared appealing to the director	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	
		Subordinates appealed to the Director and HRD	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	
		Some appeals were considered whilst others were not considered	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	

**Key for TM stakeholders:** LM →Line Manager, HRD →Human Resource Department Staff, OS →Other Staff (Offices and Supervisors), SRC →Staff Representative Council, SM →Senior Management, Docs →Bank's documents; YES – stakeholder category mentioned factor; NO-No stakeholder mentioned the factor

### **6.2.3 Overall extent of involvement of LMs in talent acquisition and identification practice**

Analysis of the study findings using Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) Four-dimensional framework (FDF) which assess the extent of involvement of LMs in TM across four dimensions (e.g., operational tasks, decision making, TM budget and acquisition of TM expertise), suggest that, overall, LMs were less involved in the practice of talent acquisition and identification. The claim is based on the results of LMs' combined involvement in the following dimensions: operational tasks, decision-making power, TM expertise and budget of the talent acquisition and identification practice.

Firstly, concerning operational tasks, the study found that LMs initiated the talent acquisition process by identifying vacancies, creating job descriptions and formulating interview questions. Analysing the initiation of TM processes by LMs using FDF suggest that LMs were more involved at operational task level, as they performed more operational tasks associated with the process (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Secondly, regarding decision-making power, LMs proposed employees for promotion into key positions. Further, LMs, together with other panellists, recommended successful employees for employment to executive management. Analysing the results using FDF suggest that LMs were moderately involved in the talent acquisition and talent identification process, since they partly participated in decision-making by making recommendations that formed the basis for executive management approval (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018).

Thirdly, in relation to TM expertise, the study found that LMs acquired TM expertise through participation in the Leadership Development Programme (LDP), which had mixed reviews on its sufficiency and effectiveness (*vide* Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2 for more details). Thus, analysing the results using FDF suggest that the acquisition of TM expertise by LMs was moderate, considering the varying opinions on its effectiveness (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Finally, regarding financial power, the study found that LMs were excluded from the talent acquisition and identification budget, as they participated only in the talent development budget (*vide* chapter 6, Section 6.5 for more details). Analysing the results using FDF implies that LMs were less involved in the talent acquisition and identification budget (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Therefore, the high involvement of LMs in operational talent acquisition and identification tasks was supported by moderate decision-making power and moderate TM expertise, manifested in LMs proposing talent acquisition and identification decisions and acquiring TM expertise through attending LDP (which had mixed reviews), respectively, and finally backed by less financial power, as manifested in their exclusion from participation in the budget. Taken together, the results imply less involvement of LMs in the talent acquisition and identification process (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014;).

Nonetheless, the question remains as to why LMs were involved to this lesser extent in the process. The following section will address this question.

#### **6.2.4 Rationale for the extent of LMs' involvement in talent acquisition and identification practice**

Previous research indicates that one motive behind involving LMs in HRM was to alleviate human resource professionals from time-consuming, routine operational tasks. By assigning these tasks to LMs, HR professionals could devote their attention to strategic HRM responsibilities (Budhwar, 2000b:294; Renwick, 2013; Nik Mat and Susomrith, 2014:1661; Azmi and Mushtaq, 2015; Bainbridge, 2015:849). On the other hand, the study revealed that the decision to involve LMs in the talent acquisition and identification process was motivated by their ability to enhance its effectiveness. LMs' close interactions with subordinates allowed them to gain a deeper understanding of suitable candidates for key vacant positions. As a result, LMs possessed valuable knowledge to create accurate job descriptions, develop relevant interview questions and effectively evaluate and identify qualified individuals for available positions within their respective divisions. This ultimately improved the overall talent acquisition process. Additionally, their extensive knowledge of employees' capabilities made them well-equipped to assess and recommend deserving staff members for promotions, as evidenced by LM7 and HRP4:



*“we are the ones who deals with the staff like first contact ... as a manager you know the skills gaps that are in the division.... So, I think the manager is better placed to recommend on who should join the division and also in terms of what sort of skills you are looking for, who is fit for where” (LM7)*

*“Their involvement is ...because they ... are on the ground... are able to identify what type of people they are looking for with what type of qualifications with what type of skills depending on their work deficiencies in their respective departments” (HRP4)*

The results underscore the rationale behind involving LMs in the talent acquisition and identification process, which is believed to enhance the effectiveness of the process (Ryu and Kim 2013; King 2015:10; D’Annunzio-Green 2018:10). Several scholars have conducted studies that support this finding. This enhancement stems from their proximity to employees, which grants them a deeper understanding of the workforce. As a result, they are better positioned to identify suitable talent, making a valuable contribution to the TM programme (Fitzgerald 2016; Ngugi 2016:21; Golik *et al.*, 2018:234; Blanco and Golik 2021).

While the extent of involvement of LMs in the talent acquisition and identification process helped to ensure effectiveness, nonetheless, it was felt that leaving their involvement unchecked could compromise it through arbitrary decisions, particularly with talent identification, as evidenced by participant SM2 below:

*“I am happy with the current situation because it allows that whatever the line manager does is checked, verified by my office because without that I have the feeling that some staff would be treated unfairly so the arrangement helps in monitoring them” (SM2).*

The findings highlight an additional reason for the extent of involvement of LMs in the talent acquisition and identification process, which is to foster fairness, equity and objectivity in the process. The research results demonstrate how the context of the CSO, specifically the public organisation’s obligation to promote equality and fairness, influences the implementation of talent acquisition and identification through the lens of LMs (Boselie and Thunnissen, 2017).

The section unearthed the way in which talent was acquired and identified through the lenses of LMs. Yet, the study also revealed that the CSO developed its talent using a hybrid practice. As such, the subsequent section analyses the implementation of hybrid talent development through the lenses of LMs.

### **6.3 Hybrid talent development (inclusive and exclusive key role)**

The study found that the CSO adopted a hybrid talent development approach comprising inclusive and exclusive key position talent development approaches to empower its talent (Ford *et al.*, 2010:4; Iles *et al.*, 2010b:182; Garavan *et al.*, 2012:7; Sidani and Al Ariss 2014:222). Inclusive talent development consisted of categories such as a self-initiated programme to support employees in advancing their careers through pursuing professional studies; a short-term specialised programme to equip employees with skills and knowledge relevant to their jobs; and a generic in-house programme to address common training needs across the CSO. The research findings support McKinsey Consulting Group's (2008) suggestion to focus on both high-performing individuals ("A players") and individuals with potential ("B players") in talent development initiatives (Ford *et al.*, 2010:4). The CSO being a state-owned entity, the finding thus partially confirms the Public Personnel Management report, which claimed that public organisations are likely to adopt an inclusive talent development approach (Ford *et al.*, 2010:5).

An exclusive key role talent development approach was manifested in the in-house LDP, aimed at developing leadership skills exclusively for employees in supervisory positions and above; and long-term training (e.g. PhD and Master's), the nominations for which also favoured employees in supervisory positions and above. The finding is in line with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) report's claim that an exclusive position talent development approach aimed at developing senior managers was common among several organisations that were studied (Ford *et al.*, 2010:4).

To ensure a systematic implementation, talent development categories were implemented using two methods: off-the-job and on-the-job talent development. The former encompassed inclusive talent development categories, such as a short-term specialised talent development programme; short-term generic in-house talent development programme; self-initiated talent development programme; and exclusive talent development programmes, like the short-term in-house LDP and long-term talent development programme. On the other hand, the latter included inclusive talent development programmes, such as mentoring and coaching. As a result, this report presents detailed findings on the implementation of talent development categories, using both off-the-job and on-the-job approaches. The presentation follows the sequence of implementation methods, starting with off-the-job and then moving to on-the-job.

### **6.3.1 Short-term specialised, inclusive short-term in-house and long-term training programmes – off-the-job talent development**

#### **6.3.1.1 LMs initiated the process by conducting training needs analysis.**

In the realm of off-the-job talent development methods, except for inclusive self-initiated and exclusive in-house LDP, all training categories (e.g. short-term specialised, short-term generic in-house and long-term) based their implementation on the results of the training needs analysis (TNA) exercise. LMs initiated the talent development process by conducting TNA for the categories in question in their respective departments, as evidenced by OF1 and document analysis in the following excerpts:

*“Departmental managers assist us with finding the areas that need to be trained. So, line managers actually check on individual basis what their needs are and helping each one according to his training need”* (OF1)

*“Identifying divisional training and development needs and suggesting strategy for addressing identified gaps”* (Doc17)

The task performed by LMs of identifying the training needs of subordinates can be categorised as operational, since it does not involve decision-making (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). In this regard, the results suggest that LMs were highly involved in operational tasks within the talent development process (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Similar findings were reported by several scholars whose studies found LMs undertaking TNA (Hutchinson and Purcell 2010; CIPD 2019; Golik *et al.*, 2018:237).

#### **6.3.1.2 LMs nominated employees to attend talent development programmes**

Consistent with *“the results of the training needs analysis, the manager recommends the list of names for training to the Director”* (OF4). This was concurred with by participant LM5, who confirmed that *“in talent development, I assess the training needs of staff and propose people to go for training to the director”* (LM5). The assertion was supported by an analysis of documents, an excerpt of which confirmed that the roles of LMs include *“identifying divisional training and development needs and suggesting strategy for addressing identified gaps”* (Doc17). The results show that LMs nominated employees for talent development intervention. This goes beyond operational tasks, as they actively proposed decisions to executive management as part of the decision-making process (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Consequently, the results

suggest that LMs had a moderate level of involvement in the decision-making process (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018). The result comes in line with several scholars who argued that LMs recommended employees for training to authorities (Hirsh 2015; Budhwar 2000b:293; Gautam and Davis 2007:20).

Some participants, however, claimed that some LMs deviated from the talent development policy by basing their nominations on identifying employees who had not travelled in the previous year, rather than from the TNA results, particularly in the short-term specialised talent development category, as claimed by participant LM3 below:

*“The training was like ok, she joined the CSO in 2010, this is 2016 ... she has never gone on a foreign trip. So, it was more or less **give her the trip just to motivate her not necessarily to fill a gap, skills gap in me ... I feel it’s more or less like, its used as.a tool to please certain individuals in the CSO. That’s where the whole objectivity goes..”***

(LM3)

The findings show that there was non-compliance with the talent development policy among LMs due to two main factors: limited resources and human resource department’s failure to enforce the budget policy. When departments submitted talent development proposals, authorities reduced budgets due to resource constraints, leading human resource department to instruct departments to prioritise training needs based on the reduced budget. This involved excluding employees who had undergone training the previous year. However, the reduced budgets were often insufficient to cover all training requirements, leading frustrated LMs to use the available budget for external travel incentives, rather than focusing on identified training gaps. Human resource department’s lack of enforcement allowed LMs to engage in these actions without facing consequences. This was evidenced by participant LM6 and documents analysis, excerpts from which are provided below:

*“once we submit the needs that’s where the problem comes in, because ...there are so many departments in the CSO... so now comes in this issue of **human resource slashing the budget without looking at the gaps...thereafter demanded them to prioritise ... mostly the budget is not enough and instead of prioritizing you just say let’s look at the amount and send people on foreign trip that’s what happens”** (LM6)*

*“In finalising **departmental training proposals**, departments are advised to **prioritise their training proposals in line with the reviewed training budget by prioritising training gaps for members of staff who never attended training in the previous year**” (Doc 31)*

The study's outcome demonstrates the impact of limited resources coupled with a lack of monitoring of LMs in performing TM tasks on implementation of talent development budget leading to deviations from the talent development policy (Teague and Roche 2012). The argument is based on the belief that if the human resource department had effectively monitored the implementation of the allocated limited budget to LMs according to the policy, these deviations could have been avoided. Additionally, if the CSO had more resources, similar deviations might have been avoided. The study by Evans (2015:45) found similar results, stating that LMs lacked support from the organisation, leading to modifications in the policy and compromising their intended participation. However, the current study differs slightly, as it identifies limited resources and a lack of monitoring by human resource department as the reasons for LMs' deviation from the talent development policy, whereas the previous study attributed it to workload and a lack of institutional support. Despite offering training opportunities to all employees, the findings support Lin's (2006) argument that HR investments in organisations with an inclusive talent development approach can be costly.

With a long-term talent development programme, besides TNA results, the position held and years of service were also considered when nominating employees for long-term training. Yet, among these three factors, the employee's current position held the greatest influence on the final nomination outcome. Specifically, employees in supervisory positions and above were given higher priority for long-term training opportunities compared to those in lesser positions, as evidenced by participant SM4 and document analysis:

*“long-term training **human resource department** gives us...criteria for identifying the candidate like the **identified skill gap to be filled, seniority of the person** being proposed because the CSO does want a scenario where you have like two people the officer and supervisor ... and the officer going first before the supervisor it will be unfair and not make sense because **of seniority and the positions**” (SM4)*

*“**nominees in managerial or supervisory positions** without master's degrees but with professional qualifications such as ACCA/CIMA should be given higher priority”  
(Doc27)*

The study's results reveal that seniority carries the most significant weight when deciding on nominations for long-term training. This highlights how the CSO context shapes talent development practices. Specifically, the presence of a high power distance culture within the CSO context greatly affects talent development decisions, leading to a strong preference for seniority over other factors. This is due to the high-power distance culture's tendency to prioritise seniority above all other considerations (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010; Agarwal 2016:6).

Some employees, particularly those in non-supervisory roles, expressed discontent with the criteria, as they believed it placed them at a disadvantage when it came to accessing long-term training opportunities, as complained by participant OF5 in the extract below:

*“Especially, long-term training...there is need for the CSO to be more supportive towards... eligible staff in the lower positions... The process should be objective and sensible because...often in the selection process for long-term training like masters, CSO prioritize supervisors without considering equally qualified officers who may have been in the department longer.” (OF5)*

The findings indicate that employees in non-supervisory roles expressed dissatisfaction with the employee selection process for long-term training, as it placed them in a disadvantageous position.

However, there were participants who held a different opinion, as they perceived the criteria to be unbiased and just. Their viewpoint was based on the alignment of the criteria with the job's nature and minimum educational qualification requirements. For positions at the supervisory level and above, a postgraduate degree was the minimum requirement, whereas positions below supervisor required a bachelor's degree, advanced diploma or certificates. Consequently, these participants found it illogical to prioritise employees below the supervisory positions, as evidenced by HRP1 in the extract:

*“The nature of jobs in **supervisory positions and above require the job holder to have master's degree**... and it's because of limited resources that we fail to send all the people in these positions at once. To address this, a fairness matrix was devised, considering factors like job position, tenure, and qualifications, **ensuring equitable access to postgraduate studies and avoiding prioritization of individuals whose roles don't mandate a master's degree such as those of officers.**” (HRP1)*

This assertion was backed by an examination of job descriptions for higher-ranking roles (Heads of Department, Managers and Supervisors), as well as lower-ranking positions (e.g. Officer), through document analysis:

*“Head of the department -Minimum Qualification required-Masters of Accounting/Finance/Business administration ” (Doc14),*

*“Manager-Minimum qualification -Master’s Degree in ICT” (Doc19)*

*“Supervisor-Minimum qualification required-master’s degree in economics, Banking or Finance-supervisor” (Doc17)*

*“Officer-Minimum qualification required -Bachelor of Business Administration/Accountancy” (Doc18)*

The collective results indicate that the selection criteria for long-term training nominations have an impact on employees, resulting in varied reactions. While some participants viewed it as a fair and unbiased criterion, others felt it prevented them from accessing long-term training opportunities, causing them to feel unimportant within the organisation (Ford et al., 2010; Iles 2013).

### **6.3.1.3 LMs implemented talent development decisions**

Once executive management approves the nominations, LMs implemented the decisions by making *“sure that people have attended their training programmes and also that they have submitted evaluation report.”* (LM18). Additionally, LMs ensured that all employees who attended training shared the knowledge acquired with their colleagues through making presentations upon returning from training, as in the extracts provided below,

*“... line managers... make sure that when people come back, they do prepare **the report and share the knowledge with colleagues**”* (SP12)

*“Ensuring that **members of staff make a presentation to their colleagues, fill forms and draw action plans based on the training attended**”* (Doc25)

Finally, *“line managers ... monitor the implementation of training budget which ensures that the department has spent within its allocated budget.”* (SM1)

The duties carried out by LMs involve tasks such as ensuring that nominated employees attend training, collecting post-training reports and overseeing the training budget. These tasks are operational in nature, as they do not involve decision-making (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Consequently, the findings suggest a high level of LM involvement in operational talent development tasks (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

#### **6.3.1.4 Summary of LMs' involvement in off-the-job short-term specialised, generic in-house and long-term talent development programmes (LMs initiated, proposed and implemented decisions)**

The preceding section discussed several issues related to talent development. The CSO's approach involved a hybrid model, incorporating short-term, long-term and self-initiated talent development programmes. These programmes were implemented using both off-the-job and on-the-job methods. For off-the-job talent development, all training categories, except the self-initiated exclusive in-house leadership development programme, were implemented based on training needs analysis (TNA) results. LMs conducted TNA and nominated employees for training, implying high involvement in operational tasks and moderate involvement in decision making processes, respectively (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Due to limited resources, some LMs deviated from the TNA-based approach and favoured employees who had not travelled in the previous year. Long-term talent development nominations considered TNA, seniority and experience, with seniority carrying more weight. LMs ensured all approved employees participated in training sessions as part of their talent development decisions implementation.

However, the section did not include details of the implementation of three talent development programmes: the inclusive generic in-house and exclusive in-house leadership development programmes, and inclusive self-initiated training, which are part of the off-the-job talent development offering. The following sections will focus on explaining how both in-house programmes and self-initiated talent development programmes were carried out, through the lens of LMs. Additionally, the on-the-job talent development method will also be covered.



## **6.3.2 Inclusive short-term in-house, and exclusive in-house LDP – Off-the-Job talent development**

### **6.3.2.1 LMs facilitated inclusive in-house programme and attended the exclusive LDP**

The short-term in-house talent development programme consisted of an inclusive generic in-house talent development programme and an exclusive in-house LDP. The former was aimed at addressing generic training needs that involved several employees across the CSO and players across the financial sector. Such in-house programmes were usually conducted whenever new developments emerged that made it necessary to keep those involved in the financial sector informed. The programmes were championed by the CSO. Besides undertaking TNA and nominating employees for training, LMs facilitated such in-house programmes, as evidenced by LM11:

*“in terms of organising training ... market development... they do have workshops aimed at ensuring that the market is kept abreast with developments, so they do hold workshops with market players.. So, **I have been involved in training the market**” (LM11)*

The role of LMs in facilitating in-house training programmes is primarily operational, rather than involving decision-making processes (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006). Consequently, the results imply that LMs were highly involved in operational talent development tasks (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018).

The latter was aimed at developing leadership and TM skills exclusively for employees in supervisory positions and above. This approach was based on the understanding that individuals in supervisory roles and above have responsibilities that involve leading and managing their subordinates within their respective divisions. An external consultant from South Africa facilitated the programme, which was implemented in stages. The initial phase involved a group of senior management individuals, such as heads of departments and executive management, followed by phases for LMs. When asked about the existence of a talent development programme offered by the CSO to enhance LMs' TM skills and knowledge, all stakeholder groups responded in agreement:

*“Yes, the CSO in some ten years ago did embark on training programme, **leadership programme** ... specifically for executive management, Directors and managers...it was **extended to managers and the arrangement is that all the managers will have to attend the programme**” (LM2).*

The stakeholders' response was corroborated by an analysis of documents, as provided below:

*“Members of staff are hereby informed that the **First Phase of the Leadership Development Programme...** was successfully completed on 8th July 2016... **the second Phase of the Programme targeting forty-one (41) Managers** across departments in the Bank will be launched in September, 2016” (Doc7).*

The presence of the LDP and participation of LMs in the programme suggest that LMs were involved in acquiring TM knowledge and skills necessary for TM (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Several researchers also discovered similar results in their empirical studies, revealing that LMs received training in TM (Trullen *et al.*, 2016:456; Golik *et al.*, 2018:237; Kotlyar 2018:690).

Yet, midway into the LDP, the CSO's top leadership changed due to the impact of low leadership independence (more explanation provided in chapter 7). The newly-appointed leaders decided to halt the programme for nearly a year, because they considered the external consultant to be costly. Eventually, the new leadership restarted the LDP, but with a directive to replace the external consultant from South Africa with a local Malawian. Although the new leadership may have had valid reasons for this decision, some participants expressed concerns that the substitution compromised the quality and effectiveness of the LDP. They felt that the initial consultant was more competent compared to their local replacement. This was evidenced by participant SM2, who expressed his reservations about the change, as in the extract below:

*“that programme which was delivered by the external consultant was stopped and I heard that our local service provider took over though I have my reservations on their capability compared to the external consultant. The Redpoint programme has assisted a lot of managers on how best they can develop talent in themselves and their subordinates. That one was a very good programme and I hope going forward it will be resuscitated.”*  
(SM2).

The findings indicate that the LDP was significantly affected by low leadership independence, leading to its sudden suspension without any evident cause. Subsequently, the programme was reinstated with a new consultant, who was widely regarded as incompetent, according to the participants' perceptions.

Unsurprisingly, some participants rated the whole LDP insufficient to fully equip LMs with TM knowledge and skills. Apart from the alteration of the consultants, the CSO's LDP was a single-occurrence programme, meaning that LMs only underwent the programme once. Consequently, participants believed that the programme's one-time nature contributed to its inadequacy because:

*“leadership I believe it's something that has to be ongoing and so even the skill set required for leadership needs to be updated because it's dynamic, so it means line managers need to attend leadership courses not just once but on an ongoing basis, because leadership changes...I would rate it as **insufficient but acceptable**” (LM12).*

Additionally, there were no discernible changes observed in some LMs who took part in the programme, as they continued to handle TM in the same manner as they had prior to attending the programme, as evidenced by the conversation I had with participant OF1:

*“Interviewer: In your own assessment do you think the training for line managers is enough for managers? Respondent: **No...because we are still unable to see the results that are yielded from the leadership development programmes, most managers have attended if not all have attended the leadership development programs but still how they are managing talent has not changed.**” (OF1).*

The study findings reveal that a subset of participants expressed dissatisfaction with the LDP's ability to effectively equip LMs with substantial TM knowledge and expertise. This sentiment stemmed from two factors: the LDP being a one-time programme and the hiring of a new consultant who was regarded as incompetent by some participants. Similar findings were reported by Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014:156), whose study found less training was provided to LMs in hospital B.

On the other hand, there were some participants who held a different viewpoint regarding the adequacy of the LDP. According to them, it was considered sufficient in providing LMs with the necessary knowledge and skills to efficiently handle talent within their departments. A significant supporting factor for their assessment was the observed transformation of certain LMs' behaviour and emotional intelligence towards TM, as claimed by participant OF5 below:

*“It helped so much, I remember one of the managers shared part of the programme called emotional intelligence and how you manage it. I actually saw change in this manager. We had a manager that we saw changed in the way she was managing people in the area of emotional intelligence before and after the training so I think it was good.” (OF5)*

This means that some participants considered the programme effective in providing LMs with sufficient TM knowledge and skills, as demonstrated by observable changes in the TM abilities of some participating LMs.

Overall, the findings indicate the following insights: LMs participated in a LDP, but the programme experienced significant disruptions due to low leadership independence. This led to an unexplained suspension of the programme and its subsequent reinstatement with an “incompetent” new consultant, as perceived by the participants. As a result, some participants considered the LDP inadequate for LMs to gain substantial TM knowledge and expertise. This perception was mainly attributed to the incompetence of the new consultants and the programme being a one-time event. However, some LMs showed changes in their TM, indicating that the LDP was effective for them. Consequently, some participants rated the LDP adequate for LMs to acquire TM expertise. Based on these findings, the study therefore demonstrates how the CSO’s context influenced the implementation of TM-LDP through the lens of LMs. The low leadership independence associated with the CSO context resulted in the engagement of an incompetent consultant, who delivered a compromised LDP to some LMs. Consequently, these LMs received insufficient knowledge from the LDP, which negatively impacted their acquisition of TM expertise and resulted ultimately in a lower effectiveness rating (a detailed explanation on the same is provided in Chapter 7) (Sidani and Al Ariss 2014). Notably, the results indicate that the effectiveness of the LDP was perceived differently among participants, with some finding it sufficient and others considering it inadequate. Consequently, the extent of TM expertise acquired by LMs was moderate, as there were mixed reviews regarding the LDP’s effectiveness (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). This finding supports the study conducted by Kotlyar *et al.* (2018:691), which also reported mixed results regarding the impact of similar programmes on LMs.

### **6.3.2.2 Summary of LMs' involvement in inclusive in-house programme and exclusive LDP**

The section revealed the implementation of a short-term inclusive generic in-house talent development programme and a short-term exclusive in-house LDP through the lenses of LMs. The section found that LMs implemented TM decisions by facilitating generic in-house talent development programmes. This meant that LMs were highly involved in operational talent development tasks (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). In addition, LMs acquired TM expertise through participating in a LDP. This implies that the extent of acquisition of TM expertise by LMs was moderate, based on the fact that there were mixed reviews of its effectiveness (*ibid.*). The following section analyses the implementation of an inclusive self-initiated talent development programme through the lenses of LMs and is the final talent development category implemented under the off-the-job method.

### **6.3.3 Inclusive self-initiated talent development – off-the-job talent development**

#### **6.3.3.1 LMs endorsed applications and supported employees pursuing self-initiated studies (initiated and implemented TM decisions)**

The CSO had an inclusive self-initiated talent development programme which was described in Chapter 5, Section 5.2.2.3. Consistent with the programme and prior to commencement of the course, employees had to seek clearance from human resource department through their LMs and heads of department. Consequently, the LMs played an essential role in initiating the process by endorsing employees' applications and confirming that the course was relevant to their specific roles and the department they worked in, as evidenced by participant OF2 and document analysis as provided below:

*“When I wanted to start my advanced diploma programme..., the **manager did his own assessment like if the programme I wanted to do will benefit our currency management department** and in my case he was convinced that the programme would assist the department.” (OF2).*

*“Applications for self-initiated training shall be **endorsed by line managers** and verified by HODs before submitted to Human Resource Department” (Doc28)*

This means that LMs initiated the self-initiated talent development process by endorsing applications submitted by employees in their respective divisions.

Thereafter, LMs implemented self-initiated talent development decisions by ensuring that the participating individual received full support, as outlined in the policies. This included granting time off from duty to attend classes and prepare for exams, and ensuring the smooth functioning of the department during their absence. The goal was to facilitate the successful completion of their studies without negatively impacting the department's work, as explained by participant LM1:

*“Like in my division I have some officers who are doing self-initiated studies related to the nature of work of the department ... So ...my work involves assisting staff by providing conducive environment to enable staff to upgrade themselves using the Bank's self-initiated programme.” (LM1)*

The tasks performed by LMs, i.e. of endorsing applications and providing a supportive environment to employees pursuing studies under the self-initiated talent development programme, are operational tasks, as they do not involve decision-making (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). The results, therefore, suggest that the extent of LMs' involvement in talent development operational tasks was high, as all the tasks were unrelated to decision-making (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). The finding agrees with some scholars who claimed that LMs' role in talent development involved assisting employees to realise their career aspirations by providing them with an enabling environment (Hirsh 2015:3; Turner 2018:324).

#### **6.3.4 Coaching and mentoring – on-the-job talent development**

##### *LMs coached and mentored employees (LMs implemented decisions)*

Besides the off-the-job talent development method, the CSO trained its talent using on-the-job training approaches, namely mentoring and coaching. The study found that LMs coached and mentored staff as provided below:

*“Line managers ... also coach and mentor subordinates in the Bank through on the job training” (SP1).*

*“Line Managers shall coach and mentor staff in their respective divisions” (Doc29)*

The mentoring and coaching tasks performed by LMs are operational tasks, as they do not involve decision-making (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Consequently, the results suggest that LMs were more involved in operational talent development tasks (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). The results are consistent with the argument that coaching and mentoring are among the crucial roles of LMs in talent development (Stahl *et al.*, 2012:29; Nyfoudi and Tasoulis, 2021).

### **6.3.5 Overall extent of LMs' involvement in hybrid talent development**

To this end, the section established the following. Firstly, the CSO developed its talent by utilising a hybrid talent development approach, which included both inclusive and exclusive key role talent development. In line with this approach, the talent development programme was divided into different categories, namely short-term (e.g. specialised, generic in-house and exclusive in-house LDP), long-term and self-initiated talent development programmes. Secondly, to ensure a systematic implementation, the talent development categories were implemented using off-the-job and on-the-job methods. The former encompassed short-term programmes like specialised, generic in-house, exclusive in-house LDP, exclusive long-term and self-initiated programmes. The latter included mentoring and coaching programmes.

Secondly, within the domain of off-the-job talent development, with the exception of a self-initiated, exclusive in-house leadership development programme, all categories of talent development (i.e. short-term specialised, short-term generic in-house and exclusive long-term) relied on TNA results for their implementation. This means that LMs initiated the process by conducting TNA and selecting employees for training. However, due to limited resources, some LMs deviated from the policy and prioritised nominations based on travel criteria, giving preference to individuals who had not travelled in the previous year. In addition to TNA, seniority and years of service were also considered when nominating employees for a long-term programme. However, seniority had a greater influence on the selection outcome compared to the other two factors. Additionally, LMs ensured that all employees approved for training actually attended the sessions. In the case of inclusive generic in-house and exclusive in-house LDP, LMs played a role in facilitating the generic in-house programme and gained TM expertise by attending the LDP, respectively. Moreover, LMs initiated a self-initiated talent development programme by endorsing employees' applications and confirming the programme's relevance.

Furthermore, LMs supported the implementation of self-initiated decisions by creating an enabling environment for officers to complete their studies.

Thirdly, within the realm of on-the-job talent development, the section established that LMs provided mentoring and coaching to employees.

Analysis of the findings using Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) Four-dimensional framework (FDF) which assesses the extent of involvement of LMs in TM across four dimensions (e.g. operational tasks, decision making, TM budget and acquisition of TM expertise), suggest that, overall, LMs were moderately involved in the talent development process. The claim is based on the results of LMs' combined involvement in the following dimensions, namely: operational tasks, decision making power, TM expertise and budget of the talent development practice.

First, concerning operational tasks, the study revealed that LMs took the lead in initiating a talent development process. For example, they conducted TNA, endorsed applications and supported employees who wanted to pursue studies through a self-initiated talent development programme. Furthermore, LMs implemented talent development decisions by ensuring that approved individuals attended training sessions and shared their knowledge with colleagues upon their return. They also facilitated in-house programmes, mentored employees and provided coaching. Consequently, analysing the initiation of the talent development process and implementation of talent development decisions using FDF suggest that that LMs were highly involved in operational talent development tasks, given that all the activities mentioned pertained to operational aspects (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Second, regarding decision-making power, the study found that LMs proposed talent development decisions (e.g. recommending employees for talent development programmes). Analysis of the findings using FDF suggests that LMs were moderately involved in talent development since they partly participated in the decision-making process by making recommendations that formed the basis for executive management approval (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).



Third, in terms of TM expertise, the study found that LMs were involved in its acquisition, since they participated in LDP which, among other things, equipped LMs with TM expertise. Analysis of the finding using FDF suggests that LMs were involved in acquiring TM expertise and the extent of their involvement was moderate as there were mixed reviews on the adequacy of the leadership development programme. (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018).

Finally, the study found that LMs had moderate financial power as they proposed the talent development budget (*vide* Chapter 6, Section 6.5 for further discussion). (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Therefore, the high involvement of LMs in operational talent development tasks was supported by moderate decision-making power manifested in LMs proposing talent development decisions, backed by moderate acquisition of TM expertise and moderate financial power, resulting in an overall moderate involvement in talent development practice. (Cascon-Pereira *et al* 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

A closer look at the results reveals that overall, LMs were moderately involved in terms of hybrid talent development, as their level of involvement in both inclusive talent development and exclusive talent development was moderate. This means that there were no differences in the level of LMs involvement between either type of talent development. The claim rests on the results of the LMs' combined involvement in the following dimensions – operational tasks, decisions, budget and TM expertise – of each type of talent development.

First, at the operational level, the study found that the level of involvement of LMs in both types of talent development was high. However, LMs were comparatively more involved in operational tasks of inclusive talent development than in those for exclusive talent development.

Second, concerning decision-making power, the study found that the extent of LMs involvement in-terms of decision-making authority was consistent (moderate) in both inclusive and exclusive talent development, simply because their involvement was limited to proposing talent development decisions.

Finally, regarding TM expertise and financial power, the study found that the extent of involvement of LMs and inclusive talent development was moderate. This was evident through LMs' participation in the LDP, which received mixed reviews, and their involvement in proposing talent development budget, respectively.

Accordingly, despite the differential involvement of LMs in operational tasks of both types of talent development, their high involvement in operational tasks was supported by moderate decision-making power, moderate financial strength and moderate TM expertise, ultimately resulting in moderate LM involvement in each type of talent development. (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

In terms of the gap between intended and actual talent development implementation, LMs contributed by circumventing the talent development budget policy.

Yet, the general question would be, why were LMs involved in talent development to this extent? Thus, the subsequent section seeks to provide an answer. to the question.

### **6.3.6 Rationale for the extent of LMs' involvement in hybrid talent development.**

Several scholars found that LMs are involved in TM with the purpose of enhancing the effectiveness of the TM process (Ryu and Kim 2013; King 2015:10; Fitzgerald 2016; Ngugi 2016:21; D'Annunzio-Green 2018:10; Golik *et al.*, 2018:234; Blanco and Golik 2021). Similarly, the study revealed that LMs were actively involved in talent development with the aim of enhancing their own effectiveness. The nature of the LMs' role involved regular and close interactions with subordinates, allowing them to gain a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. This positioned LMs favourably to accurately identify training needs, suggest appropriate training interventions and implement talent development decisions authorised by higher authorities. As a result, the effectiveness of the talent development process is enhanced, as argued by LM8:

*“Because line managers are the ones that work closely with these other members of staff ... they would know their skills gap and ...which training they should undergo ... so it's the managers who recommend to the director, so line managers are like advisors to the director because the director doesn't normally interact closely with the other staff, so he relies on the line managers to guide him” (LM8)*

The results underscore the rationale behind involving LMs in the process which, in this regard, is attributed to enhancing its effectiveness (Ryu and Kim 2013; King 2015:10; D’Annunzio-Green 2018:10). The finding partially confirms Kuvaas *et al.* (2014), who found that LMs’ proximity to employees placed them at an advantage.

The preceding section unearthed the way in which hybrid talent development was implemented through the lenses of LMs. Table 9 provides a summary of LMs’ involvement in hybrid talent development including the extent of their involvement in the practice.

**Table 10: Summary of LMs’ involvement in hybrid talent development**

No	Activities undertaken by LMs in the talent development process			TM stakeholders						Measurement of extent of involvement of LMs consistent with Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) Four-dimensional framework	
				LM	HRD	OS	SM	SRC	Docs		
1	Off-the-job training (Long-term, Specialised short-term, generic short-term-leadership development programme and self-initiated training)	LMs initiated talent development process	LMs undertook a training needs analysis	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The results suggests that LMs were involved in operational tasks of talent development and the extent of their involvement was high. This is because LMs performed several operational talent development tasks such as initiating talent development processes	
			LMs endorsed applications for self-initiated training	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
	LMs proposed talent development decision	LMs nominated staff to attend long-term training	Criteria- Training needs analysis, seniority, years of service	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes		The results suggest that LMs were involved in decision making process and the extent of their involvement was moderate. This is because LMs were involved in proposing people for talent development which is part of the decision making process.
			Complaints with criteria for nominating staff for long-term training	No	No	Yes	No	No	No		
			Objective criteria for nominating staff for long term training	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes		
LMs nominated staff for specialised	Criteria- training needs analysis	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes				

No	Activities undertaken by LMs in the talent development process		TM stakeholders							Measurement of extent of involvement of LMs consistent with Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) Four-dimensional framework	
			LM	HRD	OS	SM	SRC	Docs			
		short-term training	Divergence in training needs analysis-nomination for travel	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	<p>The results suggest that LMs were involved in operational tasks of talent development and the extent of their involvement was high. This was because LMs performed several operational tasks such as implementing talent development decisions.</p>	
			LMs nominated staff for in-house training	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
	LM implemented talent development decisions		LMs facilitated in-house training	Yes	No	No	No	No	No		
			LMs ensured staff on the approved list attended training	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes		
			LMs ensured staff shared knowledge with colleagues upon returning from training	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes		
			LMs ensured staff who attended training transferred knowledge acquired to their work	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes		
			LMs ensured staff pursuing self-initiated programme are supported	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes		
			LMs monitored the training budget	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes		
	LMs acquired TM expertise through attending in LDP		LMs attended leadership development programme	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		<p>The results suggest that LMs were involved in acquisition of TM expertise and their level of involvement was moderate. This was because the evaluation of leadership development programme they attended had mixed reviews.</p>
			Adequate TM training for LMs	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No		
			Inadequate TM training for LMs	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No		
2	On-the-job training	LM coached and mentored staff	Coached and mentored staff	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	<p>The results suggests that LMs were involved in operational tasks of talent development and the extent of their involvement was high. This is because LMs performed coached and mentored staff which part of operational tasks.</p>	
3	The rationale for the extent of LMs' involvement in talent development (initiating, proposing, implementing talent development decision and acquisition of TM expertise)		Enhance the effectiveness of the talent development process	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No		

**Key for TM stakeholders:** LM →Line Manager, HRD →Human Resource Department Staff, OS →Other Staff (Offices and Supervisors), SRC→Staff Representative Council, SM →Senior Management, Docs →Bank's documents; YES – stakeholder category mentioned factor; NO-No stakeholder mentioned the factor

Yet, the study also uncovered that LMs were involved in performance management. Thus, the subsequent section investigates the way in which the performance of employees was managed, through the lenses of LMs.

## **6.4 Performance management**

### **6.4.1 LMs initiated performance management process**

The CSO managed the performance of its employees using a two-tiered performance management system (PMS). In line with this system, supervisory employees and above underwent a comprehensive 360-degree assessment, which included evaluations from subordinates, peers and supervisors, plus self-assessment. In contrast, employees below supervisory positions went through a 180-degree assessment, consisting of self-assessment and supervisor evaluation. LMs initiated the process by drawing up performance contracts with their subordinates (e.g. officers and supervisors), as per the extracts provided by participant SM1 and document analysis below:

*“line managers in this department discuss and agree performance targets, criteria for assessing the targets, interpret the rating scores” (SM1)*

*“Line managers shall prepare and present for discussion with staff performance expectations and assessment criteria” (Doc21)*

The task performed by LMs of drawing up performance contracts is operational, as it does not involve decision-making (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). The results, therefore, suggest that LMs were highly involved in operational tasks of performance management (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). This finding aligns with the research of Nik Mat (2014:115), who observed that LMs at Airport X conducted meetings with employees at the start of the year to establish key performance indicators, which were then used as benchmarks for evaluating employee performance.

## 6.4.2 LMs appraised staff performance

After six months and towards the end of the year, consistent with the two-tiered PMS (e.g. 360 degrees and 180 degrees assessment for employees in supervisory positions and above and those below supervisory positions, respectively) and the drawn-up performance contracts, LMs appraised both employees below supervisory positions (e.g. officers) and employees in supervisory positions (e.g. supervisors) in their capacity as appraisers. Additionally, LMs assessed themselves and other managers within the department in their capacity as peers. Finally, LMs appraised their superiors (e.g. directors) in their capacity as subordinates, as explained by participant SP8 and document analysis in the extracts provided below:

*“it's the managers' responsibility to ... ensure that they do the **appraisals with the supervisors as well as with the officers and the Senior officers**. It is also the responsibility of **the line manager to assess other managers and the Directors in his department** ..., however, **the assessment** that is done to managers and Directors is not the same with the one for his juniors...**The line manager also assess himself** before the Director assesses him” (SP8).*

*“Conducting on-the-job training and **performance appraisals of supervisors, senior officers and sorters**” (Doc17)*

The task of evaluating staff performance performed by LMs is considered part of the decision-making process, as the results of the exercise were recommended for approval by executive management (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Therefore, the results indicate that LMs had a moderate level of involvement in performance management, as they proposed decisions within the performance management process (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018:266). Similar findings were reported by scholars who conducted empirical studies and found that LMs evaluated employees' performance (Hall and Torrington 1998; Nik Mat 2014:114; Blayney *et al.*, 2020:457). Lastly, the finding supports Tyskbo (2020:883), whose research revealed that LMs perceived their involvement in performance appraisals as restrictive, as their appraisal results were further reviewed by human resource department, leading to feelings of frustration.

#### 6.4.2.1 Disagreements between LMs and subordinates over performance ratings

Instances of disagreement arose between LMs and their subordinates regarding performance evaluations. Some subordinates contested the ratings given by their LMs, asserting that the assessments did not accurately reflect their actual performance. These disagreements were addressed by engaging in constructive dialogue, during which both parties shared supporting evidence and discussed the initial ratings, eventually reaching a consensus on all the evaluations, as shown by participant LM9:

*“We **discussed** because I had to inform the candidate where the shortfalls were and **ultimately, we came to a consensus** ... Yes, but I would call it an **internal disagreement** because we resolved the issues within the division” (LM9)*

The task of resolving performance disagreements with subordinates performed by LMs is an operational task, as it does not involve decision-making (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). The results, therefore, suggest that LMs were highly involved in operational tasks of performance management (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Other subordinates refrained from engaging in further arguments with LMs, due to the concern of being labelled as troublesome, potentially damaging their relationship with them. On the other hand, several employees lost motivation to pursue their grievances after realising that LMs were following the director’s instruction to limit ratings above a specific level. Subordinates believed that, even if they had pursued the matter further, it was highly unlikely that the ratings assigned by LMs would have been altered. This was supported by participant SP5, whose extract is provided below:

*“Yes, some complained to the director... but the challenge was that **the manager sometimes would be acting on instruction from the Director that no one should go beyond this rating** ... so in that case you could go to the director and complain but it was his directive that people performance ratings should not go beyond this, so what do you do, you are upset” (SP5).*

The hesitancy displayed by some employees in expressing their concerns to LMs and directors reflects, to some extent, the impact of a high power distance culture within the CSO setting. This culture fosters a dynamic where subordinates feel apprehensive about challenging the decisions made by those in positions of authority, given the significant power wielded by their superiors (Hofstede *et al.*, 2010).

#### 6.4.2.2 Subordinates escalated disagreements on performance ratings to authorities

Some disputes were escalated to department heads for resolution, because they could not be resolved at the level of the LM. When the directors received the complaints, they instructed both LMs and subordinates to reassess the situation independently and provide their ratings, along with supporting evidence. Subsequently, a meeting was arranged where LMs and subordinates were given the opportunity to present their ratings and evidence. In cases where no consensus could be reached, the director made a decision based on their understanding of the situation.

Some participants, however, did not experience any disagreements with their LMs regarding performance ratings. However, when asked how they would handle a similar situation, all of them expressed their willingness to utilise the grievance procedure outlined in the Human Resource Policies and Procedures (HRPP). This encourages employees who feel unfairly evaluated to escalate their grievances to directors and, if necessary, to the human resource department for resolution, as explained by participant SP9 and document analysis below:

*“If he underrated me, yes, I would complain to the Director **because this thing is money**...Because we are all under HR, he is my superior yes but all of us **we are under ... human resource policies and procedures and that’s the one that protect our rights here in the CSO**... if I am convinced that I am absolutely right and this manager is just underrating me for reasons that are not fair, I will escalate.” (SP9)*

*“The **appraisee shall refer the issue to the next level of authority within 1 day of the disagreement by completing an Appeals Form**. The purpose of the form is to formalize the process of seeking redress for performance management grievance” (Doc22).*

The results show that the HRPP encouraged some employees to escalate their grievances to authorities for redress.

Furthermore, the connection between performance ratings and promotion incentives served as a driving force for employees to bring their grievances to the attention of directors. Among various factors, evaluation of performance played a significant role in determining promotions. Employees who received high ratings for their performance had a greater likelihood of advancement compared to those who had unsatisfactory performance. Consequently, whenever employees perceived an unfair assessment, they sought resolution by escalating their grievances to the directors, as a low performance score diminished their prospects for future promotions, as argued by SP8:



*“For someone to be promoted ... they check the **performance that this person has had over the years and if it is wanting then you know, the promotion will not be favourable but if they see that the scores are good ... it increases the prospects of the person being promoted. So, there is a direct link between your performance scores and your prospects of being promoted, yes**” (SP8)*

The results show that promotion tied to performance encouraged some employees to escalate their performance grievances to authorities for redress.

In summary, the study results suggest that HRPP and promotion based on merit have a significant impact on employees’ willingness to raise concerns regarding their performance evaluations with higher authorities. Additionally, the study demonstrates how TM programmes are structured to align with important TM practices, such as performance management and recognition (Makela *et al.*, 2010:135). By establishing a connection between performance and talent identification, the study aligns with the findings of a group of researchers who consider performance as a commonly-used criterion for identifying talent (Silzer and Church, 2010; Juhdi *et al.*, 2015:196; Posthumus *et al.*, 2016).

Although some subordinates found it beneficial to raise performance grievances to directors in order to express their concerns and complaints, some LMs felt uneasy about this course of action. The act of escalating grievances to directors indicated a lack of ability on the part of the managers to handle their team effectively, leading to feelings of embarrassment.

### **6.4.3 Overall extent of LMs’ involvement in performance management**

To this end, the section describes the implementation of a two-tiered PMS through the lens of LMs within the organisation. Under this system, employees in supervisory roles and above underwent a comprehensive 360-degree assessment, which included evaluations from subordinates, peers and supervisors, plus self-assessment. On the other hand, employees below supervisory positions underwent a 180-degree assessment, involving self-assessment and supervisor evaluation. The process was initiated by LMs who drew up performance contracts together with the subordinates and conducted performance appraisals. LMs were responsible for resolving performance-related disputes. However, some disagreements could not be resolved at the LM level. In such cases, some employees chose to accept the outcome, while others decided to escalate their complaints to the director level for further intervention. Two key factors motivated employees to escalate

their complaints to higher authorities. Firstly, the HRPP mandated employees to seek corrective measures if they felt unfairly assessed. Secondly, performance ratings directly impacted promotional opportunities, and receiving low ratings hindered employees' chances of promotion.

Analysis of the results using Cascon-Pereira and Valverde's (2014) Four-dimensional framework (FDF) which assesses the extent of involvement across operational tasks, decision-making, TM budget and acquisition of TM expertise suggests that, overall, LMs were less involved in the performance management process. The claim is based on the results of LMs' combined involvement in the following dimensions: operational tasks, decision making power, TM expertise and financial power of performance management practice.

First, concerning operational tasks, the study found that LMs initiated a performance management process (e.g. drawing up performance contracts). Additionally, LMs resolved performance appraisal disagreements with subordinates. Therefore, analysing the initiation of performance management and the resolution of performance appraisal disagreements using FDF suggests that LMs were highly involved in operational tasks of performance management, as all the tasks mentioned were operational (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Second, regarding decision-making power, the study found that LMs proposed performance management decisions (e.g. conducting performance appraisals whose ratings were approved by executive management). Analysis of the finding using FDF suggests that, LMs were moderately involved in decision-making, since they partly participated in decision-making by conducting performance appraisals whose scores were approved by executive management (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Lopez-Cotarelo 2018).

Third, in terms of TM expertise, the study found that LMs acquired TM expertise through participating in the LDP, which received mixed reviews as to its sufficiency and effectiveness (*vide* Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2). Analysing the findings using FDF suggests that LMs were moderately involved in the acquisition of TM, based on the fact that the LDP had mixed reviews (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Finally, concerning financial power, the study found that LMs were excluded from the performance management budget, as they only participated in the talent development budget (*vide* chapter 6, Section 6.5). Analysing the results using FDF suggests that LMs were less involved in the performance management budget (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Therefore, the high involvement of LMs in operational performance management tasks was supported by moderate decision-making power and moderate acquisition of TM expertise, manifested in LMs proposing performance scores and acquiring TM expertise through attending LDP which had mixed reviews, respectively, and finally backed by less financial power, as manifested in their exclusion from participation in the performance management budget. Taken together, the results imply less involvement of LMs in the performance management process (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Upon closer examination of LMs' involvement in PMS, it becomes evident that LMs were less involved in both 360-degree and 180-degree PMS. This implies that the level of LMs' involvement did not differ between the two types of PMS. This conclusion is based on the results of LMs' combined involvement in various dimensions, including the operational tasks, decision-making, budgeting and TM expertise associated with each PMS type.

First, with regards to operational tasks, the study discovered that LMs were highly involved in both types of PMS. Second, in terms of decision-making, the study found that LMs had a moderate level of involvement in both types of PMS, because their involvement was limited to suggesting performance scores. Third, in relation to financial power, the study revealed that LMs had a low level of involvement in the budget of both types of PMS, as they were completely excluded from participating in the performance management budget. Finally, the extent of LMs' involvement in terms of TM expertise was moderate, as demonstrated by their participation in the LDP, which received mixed reviews.

Accordingly, the high involvement of LMs in operational tasks for both types of PMS was backed by moderate decision-making power and moderate TM expertise, while being less supported by lower financial power, ultimately resulting in less involvement of LMs in each type of PMS.

Yet, the general question would be: Why were LMs involved to this extent? The following section seeks to provide an answer.

#### **6.4.4 Rationale for the extent of LMs' involvement in performance management**

The CSO decided to involve LMs in performance management tasks like drawing up performance contracts with subordinates, evaluating staff and addressing performance complaints, because they believed it would improve the overall effectiveness of the process. LMs' job responsibilities involve regular and close interactions with employees, which allows them to gain a deeper understanding of their performance. This knowledge puts LMs in a favourable position to accurately establish realistic performance contracts, consistently monitor performance and conduct thorough performance appraisals, as evidenced by participant SP2:

*“it is important because **they are the ones who are on the ground, they are the ones who have direct contact with the people that they are appraising**, so they ought to know how their people are working and how they are performing” (SP2).*

The results underscore the rationale behind involving LMs in the process which, in this regard, is acknowledged as enhancing its effectiveness (Ryu and Kim 2013; King 2015:10). Similar reasons were reported by some scholars, who argued that LMs' proximity to employees placed them in a better position to draw up performance contracts and conduct performance appraisals, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of the process (D'Annunzio-Green 2018:10; Tyskbo 2020:832).

Although LMs' involvement in performance management was crucial for ensuring its effectiveness, there was a concern that unrestricted involvement could lead to arbitrary decisions that could undermine the desired effectiveness. To address this, the ratings given by LMs to employees were reviewed by the director of human resource department before receiving approval from executive management. This approach enabled checks and balances on LMs, guaranteeing transparency, fairness and objectivity in the performance management process, as confirmed by participant SP13:

*“Yes, there could be other subjectivity element that could come when you are assessing the members of staff so... **there are checks and balances probably at a certain level if something hasn't been done correctly** could be actually investigated asked why that has been done in that way” (SP13).*

The findings highlight an additional reason for the extent of involvement of LMs in performance management, which is to foster fairness, equity and objectivity in the process. The research results demonstrate how the context of the CSO, specifically the public organisation's aspect relating to the promotion of equality and fairness, influences the implementation of performance management through the lens of LMs (Boselie and Thunnissen, 2017).

The preceding section unearthed the way in which performance management was implemented through the lenses of LMs. Table 10 below provides a summary of LMs' involvement in the performance management including the extent of their involvement.

**Table 11: Summary of LMs’ involvement in performance management**

No	Activities undertaken by LMs in the performance management process		TM stakeholders						Measurement of extent of involvement of LMs consistent with Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) Four-dimensional framework
			LM	HRD	OS	SM	SRC	Docs	
1	LMs initiated performance management process.	LMs drew performance contracts.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	<i>The results suggests that LMs were involved in operational tasks of performance management and the extent of their involvement was high. This is because LMs performed several operational talent development tasks such as initiating performance management process</i>
2	LMs proposed decision for performance management (360 degrees and 180 degrees PMS systems)	LMs Appraised (subordinates, peers, heads of department, and self)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	<i>The results suggest that LMs were involved in decision making process and the extent of their involvement was moderate. This is because LMs were involved in proposing performance scores of their subordinates following conducting performance appraisal. This task is part of the decision-making process.</i>
		Disagreement on performance ratings - LMs and subordinates	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	
		PA disagreements resolved at the LMs level through dialogue	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	
		PA disagreement resolved at LMs level - subordinate did not pursue further the grievance for fear of ruining a relationship	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	
		PA disagreements resolved at LMs level - Subordinate did not pursue the grievance further-Directors instructed LMs not to rate staff beyond a certain limit	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	
		PA disagreements resolved at the director level through dialogue	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	
		Factors motivated subordinates to escalate PA grievances to HODs (grievance policy, and promotion)	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	
		LMs uncomfortable with escalating grievances to HODs	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	
3	CSO’s rationale behind the extent of LM involvement in performance management	Enhance the effectiveness of the PMS process	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	
		Ensure transparency, objectivity fairness, and accountability	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	

**Key for TM stakeholders:** LM →Line Manager, HRD →Human Resource Department Staff, OS →Other Staff (Officers and Supervisors), SRC→Staff Representative Council, SM →Senior Management, Docs →Bank’s documents; YES – stakeholder category mentioned factor; NO-No stakeholder mentioned the factor

Yet, the involvement of LMs in the TM budget was not unearthed. Thus, the subsequent section investigates LMs’ involvement in the TM budget.

## 6.5 Talent Management budget

The CSO's TM budget line included specific budget lines for TM practices, such as the talent development budget, talent acquisition and identification budget and performance management budget, among others. Of all the budget lines for TM practices, LMs were involved only in the talent development budget, as all the others were managed exclusively by the human resource department. More precisely, LMs proposed a talent development budget for executive management approval, as explained by participant LM12 and document analysis in the extracts provided below:

*“I can confirm to you that line managers we do not have decision making power on talent management budget, our work is to propose the budget and monitor its expenditure and not making decisions on the budget. The people that have decision powers are senior management and human resource department”* (LM12)

*“By formulating and recommending divisional training budget to the heads of department”* (Doc16)

The task performed by LMs of proposing the talent development budget falls within the realm of the decision-making process (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Based on the results, it can be inferred that LMs had a moderate level of involvement in the TM budget (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). The finding partially supports Budhwar (2000a), whose study found that LMs were consulted by HRM when undertaking pay and reward decisions.

Once the proposals were approved by executive management, LMs monitored the implementation of the talent development budget by ensuring that there were no budget overruns, as supported by SM1 and document analysis:

*“Line managers ... are also responsible for monitoring expenditure of the training budget when it has been approved by the authorities”* (SM1)

*“By monitoring adherence to approved training budget ceilings”* (Doc16)

The task performed by LMs of monitoring talent development budget implementation is an operational task, as it does not involve decision-making (Budhwar 2000; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Based on the results, it can be inferred that LMs had a moderate level of involvement in the TM budget, as their involvement was limited to proposing the talent development budget (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). The finding aligns with Evans

(2015), whose study found that LMs' role was limited to the implementation of budget in line with the set targets.

Analysis of the results using Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) which assesses the extent of involvement of LMs in TM across operational tasks, decision making, TM budget and TM expertise suggest that, overall, LMs were moderately involved in the TM budget. This means that LMs had moderate financial power on TM budget. The claim is based on the results of LMs' combined involvement in the following dimensions: operational tasks, decision making power and TM expertise in relation to the TM budget.

First, concerning operational tasks, the study found that LMs implemented an approved talent development budget to ensure that there were no budget overruns. The implementation of the talent development budget entailed that LMs were moderately involved in operational tasks of TM budget (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Second, regarding decision making power, the study found that LMs proposed the talent development budget. The result entailed that the involvement of LMs in TM budget was moderate, since they partly participated in decision-making (Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Third, in relation to TM expertise, the study found that LMs acquired TM expertise through participating in the LDP, which had mixed reviews regarding its sufficiency and effectiveness (*vide* Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2). The extent of acquisition of TM expertise by LMs was moderate, based on the fact of these mixed reviews (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Therefore, the moderate involvement of LMs in operational tasks of TM budget, backed by moderate decision-making power and moderate TM expertise acquired through attending a LDP which had mixed reviews determined the overall moderate involvement of LMs in the TM budget (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

The preceding sections revealed LMs' involvement in TM practices through the lenses of LMs. However, the sections did not cover whether the extent of their involvement in TM practices was expected to remain the same or change in the future. Thus, the next section investigates the extent of flexibility in LMs' involvement in TM practices.



## 6.6 The extent of flexibility of LMs' involvement in TM

The research revealed contrasting viewpoints regarding the flexibility of LMs' involvement in TM. Some participants believed that it would remain unchanged in the coming years. They attributed this constancy to the bureaucratic nature of the CSO, which hindered any initiatives for change, as indicated by participant SP6:

*“I rightly feel like **the status quo is going to be the same through and through, yes. Because the CSO is such a type of organisation which is governed by bureaucratic ideologies and for it to change the way managers are involved in the talent management, I don't think that can happen**” (SP6).*

The findings suggest that some participants believed the level of LMs' involvement in TM would remain unchanged in the future.

On the other hand, some participants expressed the belief that the level of LMs' involvement in TM would probably undergo alteration in the future. This viewpoint stemmed from the realisation that the TM policy of the CSO was an evolving document, and the CSO operated within a dynamic setting. Participants believed that various environmental factors could potentially influence and bring about changes in the degree of LMs' involvement in TM in the times ahead, as suggested by participant SP11:

*“considering that the policies are live instructions to the extent that they do change depending on how the environment is, **there is that likelihood that the extent of line managers involvement in talent management might change in the future.**” (SP11)*

The findings suggest that some participants believed there would be a shift in the level of involvement of LMs in TM in the future.

Collectively, the findings suggest that there are conflicting opinions regarding the potential changes in the level of LMs' involvement in TM in the future. While some participants believed that it would undergo alteration, others expressed the belief that it would remain unchanged moving forward.

Apart from TM responsibilities, LMs performed core duties. Yet, the preceding sections have not explained the way in which LMs aligned the two different responsibilities. Thus, the next section provides an insight into the way in which LMs aligned core and TM tasks.

## 6.7 Aligning core and TM tasks

Participants were asked how LMs aligned their core and TM responsibilities. The responses revealed that LMs relied on common management strategies, such as prioritisation, delegation and time management, to align core and TM tasks, and it was observed that LMs relied primarily on the strategy of prioritisation. Opinions diverged on how LMs prioritized tasks: some asserted that LMs often gave precedence to core tasks over TM tasks. Several reasons were put forth to explain why. The connection between core tasks and LMs' performance contracts, which directly influenced monetary rewards and promotion opportunities, played a significant role. Consequently, LMs were inclined to prioritise core tasks to avoid negative consequences, such as missed promotions, resulting from failure to accomplish these tasks. This was supported by participants SM1 and LM4, whose extracts are provided below:

*“I think because **that is the main reason they were employed for and that my assessment of their performance is based on those core tasks which are agreed in the performance contract at the beginning of each year. So, they feel that failure to achieve those core tasks could have serious effects on their job**” (SM1)*

*“It's very difficult my colleague to prioritise but I would say I would prioritise first doing my core duties **because that's what recognition exist from**” (LM4)*

Equally, LMs' lack of TM knowledge contributed to the prioritisation of core over TM tasks, as evidenced by HRP2:

*“First of all is the **knowledge gap...some of them they haven't had any training in the human resource management or talent management**, so for them to be involved it's like they are being forced to do something which they don't know ...**this makes them say no I don't think this is my job but a human resource department job so**” (HRP2)*

Similarly, the lack of enforcement by human resource department of the deadline for submitting TM assignments served as a catalyst for LMs to prioritise core tasks over TM-related ones. LMs saw no urgency in giving priority to TM tasks, since human resource department exhibited flexibility with the submission deadline. Participant SM4 supported the claim:

*“Because from experience whenever we have delayed a submission of HR assignment and we have asked for a bit of more time and **they have been more accommodative**”. (SM4)*

Likewise, the shortage of human resources influenced LMs to prioritise core tasks over TM, as LMs failed to delegate some of their workloads due to a shortage of staff, as complained of by LM4 in the extract below:

*“Sometimes it’s the workload you have a talent you want to train but there’s nobody to do the job so the job will suffer, so sometimes it’s the staffing numbers which may also hinder our talent management. You just cling to that person you don’t want to let them go because there’s nobody to do the job” (LM4)*

In summary, the study uncovers the factors that influence LMs’ preference for core tasks over TM tasks. These factors include: (1) the connection between performance contracts and core tasks; (2) the limited understanding of TM tasks by LMs; and (3) the human resource department’s failure to enforce deadlines for TM submissions. LMs prioritised core tasks due to the more significant consequences associated with poor performance, such as missed promotions and negative outcomes. In contrast, underperforming in TM tasks does not result in substantial repercussions, since they are not linked to recognition or punitive measures. LMs’ lack of confidence in handling TM tasks, driven by their limited knowledge in this area, further leads them to prioritize core tasks that they are more familiar with. Moreover, the absence of deadlines for TM tasks enforced by the human resource department causes LMs to take TM work less seriously and prioritise core tasks. Consequently, TM tasks suffer the most, as there are no consequences for not completing them. The study therefore suggests that the absence of a strong connection between performance contracts and TM tasks, coupled with LMs’ limited understanding of TM and the lack of enforcement of TM submission deadlines by human resource department has a negative impact on TM tasks. These findings support previous research by Khan (2011:60) and Tamayo-Verleene (2021), who found that LMs focused more on business objectives due to their performance being based on them rather than on HRM. Additionally, the findings align with Tyskbo’s (2020:829) study, which revealed that LMs faced dilemmas related to areas like performance appraisals, core work prioritisation, resource allocation and time constraints.

Yet, some participants claimed that LMs prioritised TM over core tasks. This was attributed to the concern that departments did not want to be seen as undervaluing human resource department assignments by failing to meet deadlines. Furthermore, participants believed that TM tasks served as a foundation for other activities, including core tasks. Therefore, prioritising TM helped them accomplish core tasks by providing guidance on

how to approach and carry out those tasks effectively, as explained by participants LM3 and HRP3 below:

*“The Directors would say can you make sure this is submitted to HR, all other departments have submitted, it’s only us. So, we don’t want to be seen as if we are doing nothing or **as if we are underrating their job**” (LM3)*

*“Basically, you prioritise on the **leadership ones** because without leadership then **everything will crumble**” (HRP3).*

The results show that efforts to dispel the misconception that LMs undermine TM work, and that prioritising TM confers benefits related to core task completion, collectively, influenced LMs to prioritise TM tasks over core tasks.

Besides prioritisation, LMs aligned core and TM tasks using delegation. LMs occasionally assigned certain core responsibilities to subordinates while focusing on TM assignments. Moreover, LMs effectively managed their time by allocating specific periods for executing each task, sometimes even working beyond regular working hours to meet deadlines for both assignments. This approach enabled LMs to maintain a balanced execution of their core and TM responsibilities.

Thus, the section established that LMs aligned core and TM tasks using common management strategies, namely prioritisation, delegation and time management.

## **6.8 Overall extent of LMs' involvement in TM and empirical contribution**

### **6.8.1 Overall extent of LMs' involvement in TM**

Overall, the level of LMs' involvement in TM was moderate, i.e. neither less nor high. The claim of moderate LMs' involvement in TM is based on the results of LMs' combined involvement in the following dimensions: TM tasks, TM decisions, TM budget and TM expertise across TM practices and processes.

Firstly, concerning operational TM tasks, the study found the following: first, LMs initiated TM processes. For instance, in talent acquisition, LMs initiated the process by identifying vacancies, drawing up job descriptions and formulating interview questions. Equally, in talent development, LMs initiated the programme by undertaking TNA and endorsing employees' applications for the self-initiated programme. Likewise, in performance management, LMs drew up performance contracts. Second, LMs implemented TM decisions. For example, in talent development, LMs ensured that employees who were approved for training actually attended the sessions. They also made certain that those who participated in training shared their acquired knowledge with their colleagues. Likewise, LMs ensured that employees pursuing self-initiated programs were provided with a supportive environment to complete their studies. Therefore, the initiation of TM processes and implementation of TM decisions imply that LMs were highly involved in operational TM tasks, as all the tasks mentioned were operational (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Secondly, regarding TM decision-making power, the study found that LMs proposed TM decisions. For instance, in the context of talent acquisition, LMs' participation in selection interviews allowed them to be part of the team that recommended successful candidates for employment. Equally, in talent identification, LMs proposed employees for promotion into key positions. Likewise, in performance management, LMs appraised employees, and their scores were then presented to executive management for approval. Hence, in terms of decision-making power, proposing TM decisions meant that LMs were moderately involved in TM decisions, since they partly participated in decision-making by making recommendations that formed the basis for executive management approval (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Thirdly, regarding TM budget, the study found that LMs monitored talent development budget expenditure to avoid overruns. This meant that LMs were moderately involved in operational TM budget tasks, as their involvement was limited to one practice of TM (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). LMs were also involved in proposing a talent development budget which was approved by executive management. The result meant that LMs had moderate financial power in decision-making (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Finally, LMs acquired TM expertise by attending a LDP, although the extent of their acquisition was moderate, as the programme had mixed reviews of its effectiveness (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

Therefore, taken together, the high involvement of LMs in operational TM tasks, supported by moderate decision-making power, moderate financial power and finally backed by moderate TM expertise, means that the overall extent of LMs' involvement in TM was moderate, i.e. neither less nor high (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014).

### **6.8.2 Overall extent of LMs' involvement according to TM philosophy**

Upon closer examination of the results, it becomes apparent that the level of involvement of LMs did not vary based on TM philosophy. The overall extent of LMs' involvement in each TM philosophy was moderate, indicating that they were moderately involved in both TM philosophies (e.g. exclusive key position TM philosophy and inclusive TM philosophy). This assertion rests on the results of LMs' combined involvement in the following dimensions: operational tasks, decision-making power, TM financial power and TM expertise of both types of TM philosophy.

First, regarding operational tasks, the study revealed that LMs initiated TM practices and implemented TM decisions for both types of TM philosophy. This was evident, for example, in LMs conducting TNAs that fall under both TM philosophies. Additionally, LMs drew performance contracts for employees in key and less important positions, using 360-degree and 180-degree PMS contracts that fall under exclusive key position TM philosophy and inclusive TM, respectively. Furthermore, LMs ensured that employees shortlisted for talent development received training for both TM philosophies. Therefore,

the initiation and implementation of operational tasks means that LMs were involved in operational tasks of both TM philosophies, i.e. their level of involvement was high.

Second, concerning decision-making, the study revealed that LMs were involved in recommending or proposing decisions for both TM philosophies. This was evident, for example, in LMs proposing performance scores for staff in key and non-key positions using a two-tier PMS that falls under the exclusive key position TM philosophy and the inclusive TM philosophy, respectively. In addition, LMs proposed employees for training in both inclusive and exclusive talent development, falling under the inclusive TM philosophy and the exclusive key position TM philosophy, respectively. Hence, this meant that LMs were moderately involved in TM decisions in both TM philosophies.

Third, in terms of financial power, the study found that LMs proposed talent development budgets for both inclusive and exclusive talent development, falling under inclusive TM philosophy and exclusive key position TM philosophy, respectively. Hence, this meant that LMs had moderate financial power in both TM philosophies.

Finally, as regards TM expertise, the study revealed that LMs attended LDP, which had mixed reviews. Therefore, the level of acquisition of TM expertise was moderate for both TM philosophies, TM expertise being used in both TM philosophies.

Taken together, the high involvement of LMs in operational tasks for both TM philosophies was supported by moderate decision-making power, moderate financial power and moderate acquisition of TM expertise, resulting ultimately in an overall moderate involvement in both TM philosophies. This meant that there was no difference in the level of LMs' involvement in either philosophy.

### **6.8.3 Overall extent of LMs' involvement according to TM practices**

Overall, the results show that there were differences in the overall level of LMs' involvement according to TM practices, with LMs being moderately involved in talent development and TM budget, and less involved in talent acquisition and identification and performance management, respectively. The claim rests on the fact that, overall, LMs were less involved in talent acquisition and identification (*vide* Chapter 6, Section 6.2.3) and performance management (*vide* Chapter 6, Section 6.4.1), and moderately involved in talent development and (*vide* Chapter 6, Section 6.3.5) and TM budget (*vide* Chapter 6, Section 6.5).

Having established the extent of LMs' involvement in TM, the question remains, why were LMs involved in TM to this extent? Therefore, the following section provides the study's findings on this aspect.

### **6.8.4 Rationale for the extent of LMs' involvement in TM, flexibility and alignment of core and TM tasks**

The rationale behind the extent of LMs' involvement in TM was attributed to the CSO's quest to enhance TM effectiveness through LMs' knowledge of employees. The close and frequent interactions LMs had with employees due to the proximity of their workplaces put them in a better position to know the employees. This enabled LMs to suggest relevant TM interventions that could effectively contribute to the effectiveness of the TM programme. However, the CSO believed that allowing LMs to undertake TM responsibilities without reviewing them could result in arbitrary actions against employees. Thus, the extent of involvement of LMs in TM was limited by providing checks and balances in the process.

Notwithstanding, some participants expected that the level of LMs' involvement in TM would change in the future due to the dynamics of the work environment, while others expected that it would remain the same as CSO bureaucracy tended to resist change.

To align core and TM tasks, LMs therefore used common management strategies such as prioritisation, delegation and time management. In most cases, however, LMs prioritised core responsibilities over TM responsibilities because the former was tied to their performance contract.



### **6.8.5 Claim for empirical contribution to knowledge.**

The study results unearthed relating to (1) the overall extent of LMs' involvement in TM, (2) the overall extent of LMs involvement according to the TM philosophy, (3) the overall extent of LMs involvement according to TM practices, (4) the rationale for the extent of LMs' involvement in TM, (5) flexibility in the level of LMs' involvement in TM and (6) alignment of core and TM tasks are very important results. This is because they make an empirical contribution to TM knowledge by responding to calls from several scholars for an in-depth study on LMs' involvement in TM in understudied national and industrial contexts (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen 2016; Anlesinya *et al.*, 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Kravariti *et al.*, 2022), and of LMs' involvement in several HRM practices (Tyskbo 2020:836). The claim rests on the following facts:

Firstly, the study extends TM knowledge on LMs' involvement in TM by providing insights into the level of LMs' involvement in TM in the under-studied context (i.e. the CSO). The level of involvement was based on the results of LMs' combined involvement in the relevant dimensions, namely: TM tasks, TM decisions, TM budget and expertise in TM practices. In addition, the study examined the reasons for this level of involvement, the way in which LMs align core and TM tasks and whether it would remain the same or change in the future. By examining LMs' involvement in TM through these multiple lenses, the study provides a realistic, comprehensive, deep and balanced insight which is new to TM knowledge, as previous studies have lacked that in-depth and broad examination of the topic, particularly from under-studied contexts such as that of the CSO.

Secondly, on the one hand, the study extends TM knowledge on LMs' involvement in TM by providing insights into its extent according to individual TM philosophies in an under-studied context (i.e. the CSO). The study found that the CSO managed its employees with a hybrid TM philosophy, comprising an exclusive key position TM philosophy and an inclusive self-initiated TM philosophy. Furthermore, the study found that, overall, LMs were moderately involved in both TM philosophies, implying that the extent of their involvement in both TM philosophies was equivalent. By extending the examination of LMs' involvement in TM into this poorly studied context to compare the extent of their involvement in individual TM philosophy within a hybrid TM philosophy, the study offers an advance in TM knowledge, as not many relevant previous studies have taken this into account. On the other hand, the study extends TM knowledge on LMs' involvement in TM

by providing insights into the extent of their involvement according to TM practices in this under-studied context (e.g. the CSO). The study found that there were differences in the level of LMs' involvement in TM practices. LMs were less involved in talent acquisition and identification, and in performance management practices, but moderately involved in talent development practice and the TM budget process. By extending the examination of LMs' involvement in TM to compare the extent of their involvement according to TM practice, the study offers new insights in TM knowledge as not many previous studies have taken this into account, particularly in such under-studied contexts as the CSO.

## **6.9 Chapter Summary**

The chapter presented and discussed research findings in relation to the second research question: How are LMs involved in TM? In particular, the chapter unpacked the theme entitled "LMs initiated, proposed and implemented TM decisions, and acquired TM expertise", which was generated in line with this research question. The key takeaways on the theme were, firstly, that LMs initiated TM processes, proposed TM decisions, implemented TM decisions in several TM practices and acquired TM expertise. This meant that the overall level of LMs' involvement in TM was moderate. Similarly, overall, LMs were moderately involved both in the exclusive key position TM philosophy and the inclusive TM philosophy. The claim for moderate LMs' involvement in TM is based on the results of their combined involvement in TM tasks, TM decisions, TM budget and TM expertise of TM practices. LMs' high involvement in TM operational tasks was supported by moderate decision-making power, moderate financial power and moderate TM expertise, ultimately resulting in an overall moderate involvement in TM. However, there were differences in the level of LMs' involvement per TM practices. LMs were less involved in talent acquisition and identification and in performance management practices, and moderately involved in talent development practice and the TM budget process.

Secondly, the moderate involvement of LMs in TM was motivated by the CSO's quest to enhance TM effectiveness through LMs' knowledge of the workforce, which is due to the proximity they have to employees, which puts them in an advantageous position. In addition, it was motivated by the desire of the CSO to ensure fairness in the process through checks and balances in the TM process.

Thirdly, there were mixed perceptions as to whether the extent of LMs' involvement in TM would change in the future. Some expected it to change due to the instability of the environment, while others did not expect any alteration because the CSO's bureaucracy tends to resist change.

Finally, LMs used common management strategies, namely prioritisation, delegation and time management to align core and TM tasks. However, LMs often prioritised core tasks. Appendix IIB, Table 6.7 summarized LMs' involvement in TM.

However, the insights unearthed in this, and the preceding chapter do not help to understand the way in which contextual factors affected the implementation of TM through the lens of LMs. Thus, the next chapter – Chapter 7 – addresses this shortfall.

## **Chapter 7: Inconsistency between Prescribed and Actual Involvement of LMs in TM due to Contextual Factors**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The two preceding chapters (5 and 6) presented and discussed research findings by unwrapping the themes titled “management of talents using hybrid TM philosophy” and “LMs initiate, propose and implement TM decisions and acquire TM expertise”, respectively. The former was generated based on the research question: How is talent understood and managed through the lenses of TM philosophy? Key takeaways on the theme were that the CSO had diverse talent definitions whose further analysis led to two understandings, namely: (1) talent as traits possessed by employees; and (2) talent as elite employees whose performance was outstanding and had the potential to replicate results in higher positions in the future. In line with the varied definitions of talent, the CSO adopted a hybrid TM philosophy that included an exclusive key position TM philosophy and an inclusive self-initiated talent development TM philosophy which was carried out within HRM policies and practices. The latter was generated based on the research question: How are LMs involved in TM? The key takeaways on the theme were, firstly, LMs initiated TM processes, proposed TM and implemented TM decisions and acquired TM expertise. This means that the overall level of LMs’ involvement in TM was moderate. Similarly, overall, LMs were moderately involved both in the exclusive key position TM philosophy and the inclusive TM philosophy. The claim for moderate LMs involvement in TM is based on the LMs’ combined involvement in TM tasks, TM decisions, TM budget and TM expertise. Thus, this high involvement of LMs in operational TM tasks was supported by moderate TM decision-making and financial power, as manifested in LMs proposing decisions on all TM practices and talent development budgets, respectively, and finally backed by moderate TM expertise acquired through attending LMs’ TM training (which had mixed reviews). However, there were differences in the level of LMs’ involvement in relation to TM practices. LMs were less involved in talent acquisition and identification and in performance management practices, but moderately involved in talent development practice and the TM budget process.

Secondly, the moderate level of LMs' involvement in TM was based on the CSO's quest to enhance TM effectiveness through their knowledge of their staff, while ensuring checks and balances in the TM processes.

Nevertheless, neither chapter 5 nor chapter 6 provided insights into the impact of contextual factors on the implementation of TM through the lens of LMs. Thus, this chapter intends to present and discuss the theme entitled "inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM due to contextual factors" generated in line with the research question: Which factors facilitated or inhibited LMs' involvement in TM? Key takeaways on the theme were, first, the interplay of politics, manifested in low leadership independence, the COVID-19 pandemic, labour legislation, the disposition of TM stakeholders, resource constraints and the CSO's bureaucracy, precluded LMs' involvement in TM, creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO. Second, TM stakeholders' support facilitated the involvement of LMs in TM. Third, based on the study results, the study generated a coalesced framework resulting from the combination of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983); the Four-dimensional framework of Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014); and the Three-dimensional framework of Teague and Roche (2012), for analysing the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO.

## **7.2. LMs' failure to perform prescribed TM tasks due to politics – low leadership independence.**

The study found that politics, manifested in low leadership independence (a situation where the CSO's top leadership changed before the expiry of their contract terms following the change in government), had a ripple effect on the implementation of TM, including compromising LMs' intended involvement in TM. Every time there was a change in government, successively, the CSO's top leadership changed as well. Among other things, the new leadership either discontinued existing TM programmes or changed TM initiatives introduced by their predecessors or introduced new TM initiatives altogether.

The primary motive behind most of the changes in the CSO's top leadership was solely focused on advancing the political agenda of the new government. Appointments for the CSO's top positions were made based on an individual's political affiliations. Each time a new government took power, they found it difficult to work with the existing top leadership from the previous government, due to a lack of trust. The new government

perceived that working with a team affiliated to the ousted government posed a threat of sabotaging their own administration. As a result, invariably, whenever a new government assumed office, they consistently appointed new leadership affiliated to it to advance its own ideology. Appointments and terminations were made despite conflicting with the laws that govern the appointment and removal of the CSO's top leadership. Consequently, the new leadership implemented TM programmes in line with their political masters' agenda, as explained by participants SP13 and HRP3 in the extracts below:

*“The top leadership of the CSO is normally appointed by the state when they are changing governments most of the times even the chief executive is also replaced ... every chief executive come up with their own agenda and mostly it's influenced by the state because they are told what they should do and that most of the time affects the talent in the CSO”* (SP13).

*“the executive management is traditionally inclined to political affiliation so ... if there is a change of government you find that those people are already taken out of the system”* (HRP3)

The study's findings indicate that the influence of politics manifested in low leadership independence, and the rationale behind it, has a significant impact on the implementation of the TM programme in the CSO. Consequently, TM programmes were altered or discontinued. These findings suggest that coercive isomorphism plays a role in shaping the TM programme's implementation within the CSO. Coercive isomorphism refers to the idea that organisations are influenced by both formal and informal pressures imposed on them by external entities, such as the state and other organisations on which they depend (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150). The argument supporting the impact of coercive isomorphism on the implementation of the CSO TM stems from the fact that the CSO is a government bank whose top leadership is appointed and dismissed by the government of the day, in line with the existing law. This means that the CSO relies on the government to appoint and dismiss its top leaders, who are key stakeholders in TM. Yet, instead of using its powers to appoint and dismiss the top leadership of CSO in line with the law, the government employs these powers to advance its political agenda. As a result, the TM programme faces cancellations and suspensions. These political actions, leading to the cancellation and suspension of the TM programme, can be seen as examples of coercive isomorphism, as they represent informal forces stemming from the government's pressure on the implementation of the TM programme within the CSO (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Additionally, these political actions align with the nature of coercive isomorphism insofar

as they emanate from a powerful organisation (i.e. the state), which exerts its pressure on a dependent organisation (i.e. the CSO) to adopt practices and structures aligned with the interests of a powerful organisation (Ang and Cummings 1997). Consequently, these forces hinder the successful implementation of the TM programme by the CSO. The study's findings partially align with Dzimbiri's observations (2015:85) regarding the influence of successive governments on the appointment, promotion, transfer and dismissal of high-ranking civil servants based on personal preferences, rather than following proper procedures, seen since the advent of multi-party politics in Malawi in 1994.

The preceding section establishes how coercive isomorphism impacted TM implementation. Yet, the results do not shed light on how it affected the implementation of TM from the perspective of LMs. Thus, the following sections provide insights into this aspect.

Low leadership independence impacted the involvement of LMs in TM in several ways. First, it created inconsistencies between LMs' intended and actual acquisition of TM expertise. As explained in chapter 6, section 6.3.2, the CSO had a LDP whose objective, among other things, was to equip LMs with TM expertise. Yet, the study found that the LDP in question was erratically implemented, due to an unmerited replacement of the service provider following a change of CSO leadership because of change in government. The first service provider for the LDP, who was from South Africa and was commended by several participants for their robust programme, was discontinued for no apparent reason and replaced by a local Malawian service provider, of whose capabilities LMs were sceptical. Consequently, the provision of TM expertise through the LDP became inconsistent, with some LMs benefiting from robust sessions delivered by the earlier esteemed consultant, while others received training from the subsequent less reputable service provider. Consequently, the involvement of LMs in acquiring TM expertise was compromised, leading to a disparity between the prescribed and actual acquisition of TM knowledge due to political influences leading to low leadership independence. This is evidenced by LM1 and document analysis, extracts of which are provided below:

*“We had a **management leadership programme** whereby we had **consultant** who really knew what they were doing, **but after about three or four years with the change of government, the consultant never continued**, you know we employed a **local consultant** who is **not doing the same job** as the **external consultant**” (LM1)*

*“Members of staff are further notified that the bank has found **a new consultant** who will facilitate the **Leadership Development Programmes** for the last cohorts of managers” (MIM)” (Doc8).*

The results show that politics manifested in low leadership independence impacted the implementation of LDP so much that there was an inconsistency between some LMs’ prescribed and actual acquisition of TM expertise.

Equally, low leadership independence created inconsistencies between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in talent development practice. These emerged as a consequence of the impact of low leadership independence on the TM programme, causing cancellation or suspensions, delays in approving training proposals for implementation and a reduction in the number of people approved for training, such as for postgraduate scholarships. Chapter 6, sections 6.3.1, 6.3.2, 6.3.3, and 6.3.4, established that LMs conducted TNA, proposed names for training and implemented talent development decisions. Yet, the study further uncovered that talent development was not exempted from the impact of low leadership independence since, on several occasions, the programme was either suspended or cancelled or training approvals were delayed, or the number of people approved for training was reduced, following the change of leadership due to a change of government. Consequently, whenever the programme was discontinued, suspended, altered or faced delays in training approvals, LMs were unable to fulfil their intended responsibilities in talent development, including TNA, staff nominations for training and implementing talent development decisions. This resulted in inconsistencies between the prescribed and the actual involvement of LMs in talent development. This is evidenced by the participant SM1 and document analysis:

*“I remember there was a time when the CSO had changed leadership and the new leadership **came in stopped postgraduate training for a period of two years**” (SM1).*

*“Members of staff are hereby informed that the Bank **has temporarily suspended offer of postgraduate scholarships to members of staff**”. (Doc10)*

The results reveal that politics manifested in low leadership independence impacted the involvement of LMs in talent development, such that there was an inconsistency between the prescribed and the actual involvement of LMs in the practice concerned.



Similarly, low leadership independence resulted in LMs' compromised knowledge of the performance management system (PMS, a tool used to monitor and manage employee performance), which in turn compromised their involvement in performance management. This was because low leadership independence resulted in an unstable PMS due to frequent PMS reviews that followed almost every leadership change whenever there was a change in government. Consequently, LMs did not take the existing PMS seriously enough to fully understand it, knowing that the PMS would not last long before it was reviewed or replaced. Additionally, it could be conjectured that LMs had less time to master an existing PMS before the introduction of a new one. This resulted in LMs lacking enough knowledge of the existing PMS. Yet, the study found that LMs drew up performance contracts and appraised staff using the existing PMS. In light of the above, the prescribed involvement of LMs in performance management (e.g. drawing up performance contracts and appraising staff – *vide* chapter 6, section 6.4) was compromised, creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in PMS. This was due to a lack of sufficient knowledge of PMS to monitor and manage performance by competently drawing up performance contracts and appraising staff. Extracts from the interviews with participants HRP2, OF5 and document analysis are provided below, highlighting the instability of the PMS due to low leadership independence,

*“Performance management in the CSO it has never settled, probably we are talking about over 8 years, it has never, even now you wouldn't say it has settled because if a leader has just been changed right now, chances are we don't know whether he is buying into what is already there”* (HRP2).

*“The last barrier concerns the CSO's failure to come up with one settled performance management system ... I feel that these things in one way affects line managers involvement because when the new system comes the managers don't take it seriously to fully understand it because they already know that it won't stay for long”* (OF5).

*“Members of staff are hereby informed that the Bank has embarked on a project to implement the balanced score card performance management framework. This will replace the current, internally developed framework for managing performance”* (Doc9).

The finding reveals that politics manifested in low leadership independence impacted the involvement of LMs in performance management to the extent that an inconsistency was created between their prescribed and actual involvement in the practice.

An unstable PMS might have had far-reaching consequences on other TM practices, such as promotions. This is because the appraisal ratings scored by LMs whose knowledge of PMS was insufficient were used to determine, among other practices, staff promotions and talent identification.

Finally, low leadership independence created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in promotions, since they were excluded from the promotions process involving some employees who had political connections with the ruling government or politicians. As established in chapter 6, section 6.2.2, LMs' involvement in promotions was limited to proposing candidates. Yet the study also revealed that some employees were promoted without involving LMs due to political connections the employee had with the ruling government or politicians. Instructions came from the government to the CSO's top leadership to promote such individuals, even if they did not deserve the promotions, as evidenced by participants LM10 whose testimony is provided below,

*"I would say **political** as well... playing a role in talent management... am talking of aspects of **either training, promotions** ...at departmental level when propositions are being made for either training, placements, promotions ... we are involved, however, with the said forces sometimes instead of being involved they are influenced by these **political aspects** as our **propositions are overturned by certain aspects at the higher levels**"*

(LM10)

The results show that politics manifested in low leadership independence impacted the involvement of LMs in promotion, to the extent of creating an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in the practice.

In summary, the study findings reveal that low leadership independence profoundly impacted LMs' involvement in TM practices such as LDP, talent development, performance management, talent acquisition and identification. This resulted in an inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM practices. The results, therefore, suggest that coercive isomorphism played a role in shaping LMs' involvement in TM, leading to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150). Coercive isomorphism refers to the idea that organisations are influenced by both formal and informal pressures imposed on them by external entities, such as the state and other organisations they depend on (ibid.). The claim stems from the fact that the CSO is a government bank, and its top leadership is appointed

and removed by the government according to the law. This means that the CSO relies on the government to appoint and dismiss its top leaders who are key stakeholders in TM. Yet, instead of adhering to the law when making leadership appointments, the government uses its authority to further its political agenda. As a result, the TM programme faces cancellations and suspensions. Consequently, LMs are unable to perform their prescribed TM roles, creating an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement. The political agenda in question, leading to cancellation and/or suspension of the TM programme, and further creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement, falls within the domain of coercive isomorphism, as it represents informal forces stemming from the government exerting its pressure on the implementation of the TM programme through the lens of LMs within the CSO (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Zsidisin et al., 2005:3410). Additionally, this political agenda is aligned with the characteristics of coercive isomorphism as it stems from a powerful organisation (i.e. the state) pressuring a dependent organisation (i.e. the CSO) to adopt practices and structures aligned with its interests (Ang and Cummings 1997). As a consequence, an inconsistency emerges between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO.

The results, therefore, support the argument for institutional isomorphism: that it provides guidance in explaining why organisations fail to implement or manage to implement programmes (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Besides, the finding partially mirrors several researchers whose studies attributed the inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM to internal forces (McGovern *et al.*, 1997; Bos-Nehles *et al.*, 2013; Sumelius *et al.*, 2014; Evans 2015; Makhecha *et al.*, 2018), referred to as delegation, alignment and monitoring problems (Teague and Roche 2012). While the previous studies attributed the inconsistency to these internal forces, the present study attributes the inconsistency to external forces termed as coercive isomorphism manifested in politics leading to low leadership independence. Precisely, the coercive isomorphism emanated from the executive branch of government and was manifested in low leadership independence. The present study therefore extends our knowledge of the forces that contribute to the inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM.

The preceding section revealed that politics manifested in low leadership independence influenced the involvement of LMs in TM to the extent that it created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. Table 11 below,

provides a summary of LMs' compromised involvement in TM due to low leadership independence.

**Table 12: LMs' compromised involvement in TM due to low leadership independence**

No	Contextual Factor	Impact on LMs' involvement in TM	TM stakeholders					
			LM	HRD	OS	SRC	SM	Docs
1	Political force-low leadership independence  <i>(a situation in which the Bank's leadership changed before the expiry of their contract terms following a change in government)</i>	Political factor-low leadership independence	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
		LMs' compromised participation in TM expertise acquisition due to a change of service provider for the leadership development programme	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		LMs' compromised participation in initiating, proposing, and implementing talent development decisions due to cancellation/suspension of talent development	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		LMs' compromised participation in performance management due to unsettled PMS which left LMs with inadequate knowledge to competently draw performance contracts and appraise staff	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		LMs' compromised participation in promotion due to compromised performance scores from compromised performance assessments due to inadequate knowledge on PMS by LMS.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		LMs' compromised participation in the promotion process as they were not involved in promotions of staff with political connections	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No

**Key for TM stakeholders:** LM →Line Manager, HRD →Human Resource Department Staff, OS →Other (Officers and Supervisors) Staff, SRC→Staff Representative Council, SM →Senior Management, Docs →Bank's documents; YES – stakeholder category mentioned factor; NO-No stakeholder mentioned the factor

However, the study showed that the COVID-19 pandemic also impacted LMs' involvement in TM, leading to a similar inconsistency. Thus, the subsequent section examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on LMs' involvement in TM.

### 7.3 LMs' failure to perform prescribed TM tasks due to the COVID-19 pandemic

The study revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the involvement of LMs in TM to the extent of creating an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM in several respects. First, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in LMs' failure to appraise staff performance. As already established in Chapter 6, section 6.4, LMs' role in performance management involved drawing up performance contracts, appraising staff and resolving performance appraisal disagreements. Yet, the study further found that the CSO streamlined its operations to allow social distancing on the premises to curb further spread of the virus. In a one-week rotation, some employees worked on-site and the rest virtually. Yet, a closer look at the CSO's initiative suggested that it was a response strategy to the COVID-19 pandemic copied from elsewhere, as participants' interviews vividly indicated that the CSO was not ready for virtual working, for the following reasons: first, a significant number of staff members who were expected to work remotely faced difficulties in carrying out their tasks due to a lack of necessary tools, such as laptops and internet data, as the CSO did not provide them. Consequently, these employees perceived the situation more as a break rather than a working arrangement (Galanti *et al.*, 2021:426). Second, human resource department had no mechanism to assist LMs to monitor and manage the performance of staff working virtually. Faced with these challenges, the executive management decided to suspend the performance management process. This suspension meant that LMs were unable to fulfil their prescribed roles in performance management, including creating performance contracts and conducting performance appraisals. Consequently, a discrepancy arose between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in the performance management system. This is evidenced by participant HRP1 and document analysis, excerpts of which are provided below:

*“when **the pandemic** broke out... we had to **decongest** the CSO to contain the spread of the virus... some people who worked from **homes ended up not working** at all because they **had no laptops and data** to enable **them work**, and that's the reason executive management **suspended the performance management process**... Yes, in terms of **line managers involvement** it's the same thing because **these managers were not able to manage anybody because most of their staff were home** ... they **had no facilities** to help them work” (HRP1).*

*“Effective Wednesday, 22nd July 2020, access to CSO premises will be granted only to members of staff in line with the Business Continuity Plan (BCP), during the decongestion period ...to curtail overcrowding at workplace and limit exposure to the risk of COVID-19 pandemic” (Doc5).*

The results indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the involvement of LMs in performance management, leading to a discrepancy between their prescribed and actual involvement. This discovery partially aligns with McKinsey’s (2020:29) findings, which revealed that 76% of companies in the United States of America (USA) required their employees to work remotely due to the pandemic’s impact. Yet, this finding contradicts the Willis Towers Watson Survey (2020), which discovered that around 17% of companies in the USA and Canada provided their employees with assistance in the form of virtual work tools like internet access, laptops and subsidies for utility bills to facilitate remote work.

In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic impeded LMs’ involvement in talent development. As established in Chapter 6, section 6.3, LMs assessed employees’ training needs, proposed candidates for training and implemented training programmes. Yet, the study further found that the CSO cancelled all training programmes, including LDP, due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, LMs were unable to carry out TNA, nominate individuals for training, implement training programmes or acquire TM expertise. This ultimately led to a discrepancy between their prescribed and actual involvement in talent development. This is confirmed by participants LM3, SM3 and document analysis:

*“When COVID-19 was just discovered in Malawi, most of the things were put on hold...there was no local training, no foreign training due to the travel ban” (LM3)*

*“Yes, there was leadership programme... it’s only the COVID-19 pandemic that has disturbed everything” (SM3)*

*“Members of staff are hereby informed that in line with measures adopted by the Malawi Government... the CSO has reviewed its operations and developed and adopted additional measures as follows, (1) suspension of foreign travel and foreign visits” (Doc6).*

This implies that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted LMs' involvement in talent development to the extent of creating an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in the practice.

Similarly, the CSO's streamlining of its operations due to the pandemic included suspension of talent acquisition and identification. However, in Chapter 6, section 6.2.1, the study established that LMs identified vacancies, drew up job descriptions and participated in selection interviews. Consequently, the suspension of talent acquisition and identification practice meant that LMs could not perform their talent acquisition roles, creating yet another inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs, on this occasion in talent acquisition and identification. This is supported by HRP1 and SP13 whose extracts are provided below:

*“We have **not been able to recruit** this year because of **social distancing requirements** ...” (HRP1)*

*“So far there **hasn't been any recruitment** for fear of that contact ... so **recruitment of external members of staff has been put on hold**” (SP13).”*

The results, therefore, reveal that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the implementation of talent acquisition and identification through the lens of LMs, such that there was an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in the practice. They also, therefore, partially confirm the Willis Towers Watson survey (2020), which found that 42% and 28% of organisations in the USA and Canada suspended or contemplated suspending recruitment due to the pandemic.

Finally, employees who tested positive for COVID-19, as well as those who fell sick, had to isolate until they became well and tested negative. Sadly, some LMs who got infected with the COVID-19 pandemic passed away. LMs who tested positive for COVID-19 and got sick carried out no TM tasks for the entire isolation period and, of course, LMs who passed away were no longer there to perform their intended TM responsibilities. Consequently, an inconsistency was created between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM, as explained by participants SM3, LM19 and document analysis:

*“With this **third wave** we had a number of **cases in the department** and because of that it meant that **the protocol** required that all **those people that may be had contact** with the persons concerned **be in isolation**” (SM3).*

*“I will say it has partly affected on the talent. **we lost I think members of staff**” (LM19).*

*“Members of staff are hereby informed that in line with measures adopted by the Malawi Government ...the CSO has reviewed its **operations** and developed and adopted **additional measures as follows... (3) facilitate quarantine and follow up on exposed/suspected and confirmed cases**” (Doc6)*

With some LMs ill and some having died, there was – to put it at its very least – an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual roles in TM. The study’s results, therefore, partially align with Chimbanga-Kadonzvo (2021), who found that LMs struggled to motivate teams working from home due to the impact of the pandemic.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that the COVID-19 pandemic impeded the involvement of LMs in various TM practices leading to an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement. Consequently, the results suggest that mimetic isomorphism influenced the involvement of LMs in TM. Mimetic isomorphism refers to institutional forces that affect organisations to the extent that they are unaware of the processes or strategies that might lead them to desired outcomes, and consequently compel them to copy strategies from a successful organisation in order to survive the unfortunate circumstances (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Levy 2004:5; Wells and Henkin, 2005:269; Sidani and Al Ariss 2014; Adebola 2017:67; Thunnissen and Buttiens 2017:395). Within the context of the CSO, the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic caught them unprepared, lacking an internally developed strategy to navigate through troubled times. Consequently, the CSO resorted to copying the COVID-19 response strategy employed by other successful organisations. This strategy involved various measures such as streamlining operations, cancelling certain TM programmes and implementing remote work for employees to alleviate overcrowding at the office. The fact that the CSO did not provide its employees with the necessary tools to work from home, as it had no such resources, serves as evidence that the response strategy was indeed copied from external sources. Consequently, employees who were expected to work remotely were unable to do so. This highlights the challenge of implementing strategies that are externally derived and do not align with the specific nature of the organisation. Hence, the CSO’s copying of external COVID-19 response strategy, driven by mimetic isomorphism, impeded the implementation of their programmes, including the involvement of LMs in TM, resulting in a discrepancy between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM.



Furthermore, the finding partially reflects those of several studies which attributed the inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM to internal forces (McGovern *et al.*, 1997; Bos-Nehles *et al.*, 2013; Sumelius *et al.*, 2014; Evans 2015; Makhecha *et al.*, 2018), referred to as delegation, alignment and monitoring problems (Teague and Roche 2012). The present study therefore extends our knowledge of the factors contributing to the inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM as, while the previous studies attributed the gap to internal factors such as delegation, alignment and monitoring problems, the present study attributes the gap to the external factor mimetic isomorphism manifested in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of TM through the lens of LMs.

The preceding section therefore revealed that the impact of COVID-19 pandemic influenced the involvement of LMs in TM, to the extent that it created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. Table 12 below shows LMs' compromised involvement in TM due to COVID-19.

**Table 13: LMs' failure to perform prescribed TM tasks due to COVID-19 pandemic.**

No	Contextual Factor	Impact on LMs' involvement in TM	TM stakeholders					
			LM	HRD	OS	SRC	SM	Docs
1	COVID-19 pandemic caused the cancellation of talent development	LMs could not undertake. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• training needs analysis</li> <li>• Nominate staff for training.</li> <li>• Implement talent development decisions</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		LMs could not participate in the acquisition of TM expertise	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	COVID-19 pandemic caused cancellation of the performance management system (the CSO decongested and had some staff working from home. Yet not all staff working from home had working tools e.g. laptops, internet data)	LMs could not draw up performance contracts and appraise staff.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	COVID-19 pandemic caused the suspension of the talent acquisition process	LMs could not undertake the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify vacancy,</li> <li>• draw up job description,</li> <li>• participate in selection interviews</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	COVID-19 pandemic caused deaths and isolation of staff	LMs could not undertake TM roles for the entire isolation period	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

*Key for TM stakeholders: LM →Line Manager, HRD →Human Resource Department Staff, OS →Other Staff (Officers and Supervisors), SRC →Staff Representative Council, SM →Senior Management, Docs →Bank's documents; YES – stakeholder category mentioned factor; NO-No stakeholder mentioned the factor*

However, the study found that LMs' involvement in TM was also affected by social and legal factors. Thus, the subsequent section explains how employment legal instruments affected the implementation of TM through the lenses of LMs.

#### **7.4 LMs' cautious participation in TM due to legal factors**

The study found that the CSO aligned TM policies with employment law (Labour Relations Act and Employment Act - which advocate for democratisation and respect for human rights), to ensure that its TM endeavours met the legal requirements for fairness, equity and objectivity, as pointed out by HRP2:

*“The first factor is legal; you know the CSO is a government institution and whatever it does regarding talent management has to follow the **legal instruments** that deal with human resources...**Employment Act and the Labour Relations Act**... the **policies in the Bank** respects issues of fairness and equitability of employees ...that really have affected talent management in **recruitment, promotion, performance management, recognition of performance among others**” (HRP2)*

The results show the influence of legal factors on the implementation of TM through the lens of LMs, leading to harmonization of TM with employment law. This latter demonstrates the impact of coercive isomorphism on CSO's TM in terms of legal compliance (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Jamu (2017) reports similar pressures being experienced at Malawian public universities.

Given that TM policies were aligned with prevailing employment law, compliance with TM policies while implementing TM programmes entailed complying with the law. Thus, LMs – being among the TM stakeholders involved in implementing TM programmes – had to cautiously execute their TM roles in line with TM policies, at the same time ensuring that their actions did not contravene any legal provisions provided in the said policies, as failure would have resulted in lawsuits, as indicated by participant LM12:

*“Managers have had to **now be more cautious** on how they implement their talent management... before they can even **institute certain sanctions** whether they are **fair and that kind of thing**... this is one area where the **legal aspects, legal developments** ... has affected how we have **conducted the talent management as managers**” (LM12).*

Thus, legal factors influenced LMs to comply with legal provisions when performing TM roles. The finding confirms those of several scholars who found that LMs had to comply with employment legal provisions and human rights in undertaking their HRM roles (Harris

*et al.*, 2002; Khan 2011; Glaister *et al.*, 2021). In terms of coverage and operational tasks, the findings partially confirm Gooderham *et al.* (2015), who argued that in a highly regulated country, LMs are more involved. This is the case as, in Chapter 6, it was established that in terms of coverage, LMs were highly involved in various operational TM tasks (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). However, in terms of decision- making power, the finding conflicts with Gooderham *et al.*, (2015), since the study found that LMs were moderately involved in TM, as they were limited to proposing decisions.

## **7.5 Summary on LM's compromised involvement in TM due to external factors (politics, COVID-19 and legal)**

To that end, the previous sections unearthed that external institutional forces, specifically coercive isomorphism manifested in politics and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, affected the involvement of LMs in TM. This created a discrepancy between the expected and actual involvement of LMs in TM. Politics manifested in low leadership independence resulted in various negative consequences. First, the implementation of the LDP became inconsistent due to changes in consultants, leading to variations in the quality of training attended by LMs. Second, instability in the PMS hindered LMs' knowledge acquisition in performance management and their active involvement in the process. Third, talent development programmes were cancelled, preventing LMs from fulfilling their roles in developing talent. Lastly, LMs were excluded from promoting certain employees with political connections, which limited their ability to nominate employees for key positions.

Similarly, mimetic isomorphism manifested in the impact of COVID-19 pandemic created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. This was primarily caused by the cancellation and suspension of TM programmes. Moreover, the pandemic resulted in sickness and fatalities among staff members. As a consequence, LMs were unable to fulfil their prescribed TM responsibilities. A summary of LMs' compromised involvement in TM due to external contextual factors is provided in Table 13 below.

**Table 14: LMs cautious and compromised involvement in TM due to external factors**

No	Contextual Factor	Impact on LMs' involvement in TM	TM stakeholders					
			LM	HR D	OS	SRC	SM	Docs
1	Political force-low leadership independence  <i>(a situation in which the CSO's leadership changed before the expiry of their contract terms following a change in government)</i>	Political factor – low leadership independence	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
		LMs' compromised participation in TM expertise acquisition due to a change of service provider for the leadership development programme	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		LMs' compromised participation in initiating, proposing, and implementing talent development decisions due to cancellation/suspension of talent development	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		LMs' compromised participation in performance management due to unsettled PMS, which left LMs with inadequate knowledge to competently draw performance contracts and appraise staff	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		LMs' compromised participation in promotion due to compromised performance scores from compromised performance assessments due to inadequate knowledge on PMS.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		LMs' compromised participation in the promotion process as they were not involved in promotions of staff with political connection	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
2	COVID-19 caused the cancellation of talent development programmes	LMs could not undertake. • training needs analysis • Nominate staff for training. • Implement talent development decisions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		LMs could not participate in the acquisition of TM expertise	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	COVID-19 caused cancellation of the performance management system <i>(the Bank decongested and had some staff working from home. Yet not all staff working from home had working tools e.g., laptops, internet data)</i>	LMs could not draw up performance contracts and appraise staff.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	COVID-19 caused the suspension of the talent acquisition process	LMs could not undertake the following, • identify vacancy, • draw up job description, • participate in selection interviews	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	COVID-19 caused deaths and isolation of staff	• LMs could not undertake TM roles for the entire isolation period. • LMs could not undertake intended TM roles as they had passed on	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	Legal – Employment Acts  <i>(TM policies were harmonised with the country's employment legal laws)</i>	• LMs cautiously executed TM activities in line with TM policies.	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No

**Key for TM stakeholders:** LM → Line Manager, HRD → Human Resource Department Staff, OS → Other Staff (Officers and Supervisors), SRC → Staff Representative Council, SM → Senior Management, Docs → Bank's documents; YES – stakeholder category mentioned factor; NO- No stakeholder mentioned the factor.

Yet, there were also internal factors that affected the involvement of LMs in TM (e.g. disposition of TM stakeholders, the CSO's bureaucracy, resource constraints and TM stakeholders' support for TM programme) to the extent of creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement in TM. The subsequent sections investigate the impact of internal factors on the involvement of LMs in TM.

## **7.6 Inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM due to the disposition of TM stakeholders**

The study found that the disposition of TM stakeholders hindered LMs' involvement in TM resulting in an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM. Firstly, the study found that the disposition of TM stakeholders manifested in a lack of TM ownership was reflected in some LMs' not taking responsibility for evaluating their employees' performance, for fear of being labelled bad managers. Consequently, some subordinates appraised themselves, as LMs participated only partially in the exercise. Similarly, some LMs completely divorced themselves from their subordinates, as they took no interest whatsoever in TM. This extract from the interview with participant LM12 provides evidence for the claim,

*“The barrier ... sometimes some managers fail to take responsibility and they want to be good to their subordinates in the sense that they leave to the subordinates to appraise themselves because they don't want to take responsibility or because they want to be good to them” (LM12)*

This implies that LMs' lack of TM ownership, reflected in their reluctance to appraise employee performance for fear of being labelled a bad manager, impacted their involvement in TM, leading to an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM.

Likewise, the study found that some LMs viewed TM as the work of human resource department and became reluctant to take ownership of TM tasks, as a result not performing the TM roles. This led to an inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM, as LMs failed to perform their prescribed TM roles. Evidence comes from participant SP13, whose extract is provided below:

*“The main reason could be more especially between **the human resources and the line managers** it's probably that arrangement to say because **talent management** is ... for the **human resource** ... so it's that line of **thinking** you find that **some managers** wouldn't actually do **their actual job** in the **talent management**” (SP13)*

This implies that the disposition of TM stakeholders, where LMs lacked ownership of TM, was manifested in two areas. Firstly, LMs refrained from evaluating employees' performance, due to concerns about being perceived as bad managers. Second, LMs perceived TM as the responsibility of human resource department, neglecting their own TM work, resulting in an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM.

Overall, the results suggest that internal factors may also be responsible for the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO (Buyens and De Vos, 2001; Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou, 2005:289; Sikora and Ferris 2014; Evans 2015; Gadsden *et al.*, 2017:22; Tyskbo 2020:831), in particular delegation problems (Teague and Roche 2012). These arose from differing opinions between LMs and key HRM stakeholders regarding HRM work delegated to LMs (Buyens and De Vos, 2001; Teague and Roche 2012; Evans 2015; Gadsden *et al.*, 2017:22), as well as LMs' self-serving behaviour (Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005:289; Teague and Roche 2012; Sikora and Ferris 2014; Tyskbo 2020: 831). In the context of the CSO, the former is manifested in LMs' reluctance to perform TM work, believing that TM is work for the human resource department. This belief created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO (Buyens and De Vos, 2001; Maxwell and Watson 2006; Nehles *et al.*, 2006; Evans 2015; Gadsden *et al.*, 2017:22), because LMs did not view the TM work delegated to them as their own, thus differing from the view human resource department had of the work delegated to LMs. The latter is reflected in LMs' reluctance to appraise staff members, for fear of being labelled bad managers and leading to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM (Papalexandris and Panayotopoulou 2005:289; Teague and Roche 2012; Sikora and Ferris 2014). In this respect, delegation problems reflected in LMs' self-serving behaviour and varied opinions with key TM stakeholders on delegated TM work to LMs led to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO.

Furthermore, the LMs' lack of TM knowledge played a role in their failure to take ownership of TM work leading to an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM. This was evidenced by participants SM4 and HRP4 whose extracts highlighted how LMs' lack of TM knowledge led to their lack of TM ownership, as noted below:

*“Some of the line managers are not aware of what is expected of them. In terms of the latitude that human resource has given them”. (SM4)*

*“lack of awareness in terms of what role do line managers really play as regards to talent management, there are some other things that the line managers for example do but they don't own them,” (HRP4)*

The inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO can also be explained by other internal factors, such as a lack of HRM training for LMs (Maxwell and Watson 2006; Purcell and Hutchinson 2007; Townsend *et al.*, 2012); this could be categorised as alignment problems (Teague and Roche 2012). These occur when there is insufficient organisational support for LMs to carry out HRM work, resulting in an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM (Evans 2015). In the context of the CSO, the lack of support for LMs' involvement in TM is evident in a lack of effective training to equip LMs with TM knowledge and skills (Cunningham and Hyman 1995:19; Renwick 2003:275; Maxwell and Watson 2006; Purcell and Hutchinson 2007; Teague and Roche 2012; Townsend *et al.*, 2012; Herington *et al.*, 2013:72; Blayney *et al.*, 2019). Although the CSO had a LDP intended, among other things, to equip LMs with TM knowledge, some participants rated the programme as ineffective, and this may have been the reason why some attributed LMs' reluctance to perform TM work due to a lack of TM knowledge (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2).

Similarly, the weak link between TM tasks and the LMs' performance contract, as well as the promotion process, led to LMs not taking ownership of their TM responsibilities, which ultimately, resulted in their failure to perform the TM work. This was due to LMs being aware that there would be no serious consequences, even if they neglected their TM duties, as these were not included in their PMS, as observed by participant OF3:

*“talent management hasn't really been linked to performance of the managers, so they feel like even if they don't groom...mentor the subordinate... it's business as usual, ... there are no consequences” (OF3)*

The reason for the inconsistency between LMs' prescribed and actual involvement in TM can be attributed to lack of a strong connection between TM work and their PMS contract, as well as the promotion process.

Likewise, the study results show that human resource department's failure to enforce the TM assignments submission deadline motivated LMs to prioritise core over TM tasks (*vide* Chapter 6, section 6.7). Consequently, there was an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM, as it was mostly TM work that suffered.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the weak connection between TM tasks and LMs' performance contract and promotion procedure, along with human resource department's failure to enforce TM submission deadlines, resulted in LMs not performing TM tasks. Consequently, this led to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. The results suggest that this inconsistency can be attributed to internal factors that Teague and Roche (2012) categorised as monitoring problems. As described by Evans (2015), monitoring problems refer to the lack of evaluation of LMs' involvement in HRM, which led them not to take their responsibilities seriously. Consequently, this lack of seriousness resulted in a discrepancy between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM. In this context, the monitoring problem is manifested in the weak connection between LMs' TM tasks and their job descriptions and performance contracts, making it challenging to monitor their involvement in TM, as there is no basis for such action. Additionally, the lack of monitoring is evident in the human resource department's failure to enforce TM submission deadlines. These findings partially support Nehles *et al.*'s (2006:258) argument that LMs' accountability for HRM tasks necessitates linking such tasks to their job descriptions and performance agreements as a basis for evaluation. Lastly, the results align with McGovern *et al.*'s (1997) study, which attributed the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM to monitoring issues.

Given the above, the study unsurprisingly, perhaps, found that, when aligning core tasks and TM tasks, LMs often prioritised core tasks at the expense of TM tasks, resulting in an inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM (*vide* Chapter 6, section 6.7). These findings, therefore, suggest that the inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM can also be attributed to internal factors, such as lack of LMs' motivation to perform HRM work (Silzer and Dowell 2010:69;



D'Annunzio-Green 2018). This internal factor falls under the realm of delegation problems (Teague and Roche 2012). According to Teague and Roche (2012), delegation problems arise when LMs prioritise core tasks over HRM due to a lack of motivation in performing HRM work. In this context, the deficiency of LMs' motivation stems from the weak connection between their TM work, the job description and performance management. As a result, LMs prioritise their core tasks over TM work because these activities are valued and acknowledged. These findings align with the perspectives of several scholars who also attribute the inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM to delegation problems (Brandl *et al.*, 2009:194; Hutchinson and Purcell 2010:365; Adebola 2017).

Secondly, the study found that the disposition of TM stakeholders, manifested in office politics, affected LMs' involvement in TM. This led to an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM. Some subordinates had very good relationships with their directors and used these as the means for advancing their agendas at the expense of LMs. These subordinates went behind LMs' backs and gossiped with the director about unfounded issues regarding LMs. Due to their close rapport, the director believed their perspective and consequently chose to exclude LMs from participating in some vital TM activities and decisions, which in turn hampered their involvement in TM, as pointed out by participant LM21 in the extract below:

*“Some heads of department allowing certain staff to go behind the **back of their bosses... say something**, then the head of department thinks that's truth and then he starts **not involving you in certain decisions...it undermines your powers**” (LM21)*

This shows that the disposition of TM stakeholders reflected in office politics, where subordinates gossiped with directors about LMs, impacted the involvement of LMs in TM, creating an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM.

Besides office politics, the study found that the disposition of TM stakeholders was manifested in unilateral TM decision-making by authorities for no apparent reason. For example, there were instances where directors decided on training or promotion without involving LMs. As a result, this created an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM. This is confirmed by participant SP13, whose extract is provided below:

*“Sometimes the **bosses of the line managers** ...make decisions on their own like **promotion**, choosing people for **training** and this affect **line managers** involvement in talent management because it takes away **their input in the decisions**” (SP13)*

Thus, the disposition of TM stakeholders manifested itself in unilateral TM decision-making by the authorities, impacted the involvement of LMs in TM. This created another inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM.

In summary, the results show that the disposition of TM stakeholders, reflected in office politics and unilateral TM decision-making by authorities, impacted the involvement of LMs in TM, which led to an inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. The results suggest that the inconsistency can be attributed to internal factors, specifically lack of support for LMs in performing HRM work (Hutchinson and Purcell 2003; Evans 2015), which can be categorised as an alignment problem (Teague and Roche 2012). These occur when there is insufficient organisational support for LMs to carry out HRM work, resulting in an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM (Evans 2015). In this specific context, the lack of support for LMs in performing TM tasks (the alignment problem) is evident in the CSO’s failure to create an environment that enables LMs to fulfil their prescribed TM responsibilities. This failure is clearly demonstrated by the CSO’s lack of effort to reduce bureaucratic practices or to discourage directors from making unilateral decisions based on office politics (see section 7.7). Consequently, it can be inferred that the alignment problems reflected in disposition of TM stakeholders through office politics and unilateral decision-making by authorities inhibited LMs’ involvement in TM, leading to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. The finding aligns with scholars whose studies attributed the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM to lack of support for LMs in performing HRM tasks (Thornhill and Saunders 1998; Conway and Monks 2010).

## **7.7 Inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM due to resource constraints**

The study found that resource constraints precluded LMs' involvement in TM to the extent that it led to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual LMs' involvement in TM. For example, financial constraints inhibited LMs from addressing all the vital capacity-building needs unearthed during the TNA exercise. Besides financial constraints, LMs' involvement in TM was inhibited by the shortage of human resources. LMs were unable to delegate some of their workloads, due to a shortage of staff. As a result, some of the TM work could not be performed, creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. This is shown by participants SP8, and LM4 in the extracts below:

*“the major **barrier** is...**lack of resources** ... most managers... they're not able to close that gap because of **lack of financial resources** ... to train the officers in the areas...are vital”*  
(SP8).

*“it's the **workload** you have a talent you want to train **but there's nobody to do the job** so the job will suffer, so sometimes it's **the staffing numbers** which may also **hinder our talent management.**”* (LM4)

The results show that resource constraints impacted the involvement of LMs in TM, resulting in an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM, and that the inconsistency can be attributed to internal factors, specifically, resource constraints (Hutchinson and Purcell 2008:56; Grant *et al.*, 2020:921), categorised as alignment problems (Teague and Roche 2012). According to Evans (2015), alignment problems arise due to a lack of organisational support for LMs in performing HRM work, resulting in an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM. In the context of the CSO, the alignment problem is evident in resource constraints that leave LMs with insufficient tools (e.g. financial and human resources) to carry out their prescribed TM tasks effectively. This problem leads to an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM. The finding aligns with several scholars who also pointed to resource constraints (Evans 2015:467; D'Annunzio-Green 2018:8).

Consistent with resource constraints, in particular financial resources, the study found that some LMs deviated from the training policy by basing their nominations for training on those subordinates who had not travelled in the previous year, rather than on a TNA. While LMs' non-compliance with policy was in part due to limited resources, human resource department's lack of enforcement of the policy played a role in LMs' deviation from it. This is because whenever departments submitted talent development proposals for approval, authorities slashed the proposals drastically downwards due to limited resources. Based on the reduced talent development budgets, human resource department directed departments to prioritise their training needs consistent with the slashed training budget by, among other things, ensuring that employees who attended training in the previous year were not included in that year's talent development programme. More often than not, however, the limited budgets were insufficient to cover all training needs. Consequently, out of frustration, some LMs resorted to using the budget to motivate their employees through travel opportunities, as the prioritisation was based on those who had not travelled in the previous year, rather than any identification of training gaps. Unfortunately, the LMs escaped any adverse consequences for these illicit actions because human resource department never enforced the talent budget prioritisation policy (see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.1). Consequently, the practice created an inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM.

The study findings indicate that the lack of human resource department monitoring of how LMs implemented the approved talent development budget resulted in an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM and that this inconsistency can be attributed to internal factors, specifically categorised as monitoring problems (Teague and Roche 2012). Monitoring problems, as described by Evans (2015) refers to the failure to assess LMs' involvement in HRM tasks, which resulted in LMs not taking HRM seriously and either not performing the tasks or not following the prescribed guidelines. In the context of the CSO, the absence of human resource department monitoring becomes evident when LMs deviate from the talent development budget policy without consequences. If human resource department had consistently monitored the implementation of the revised budget, LMs would probably not have dared to deviate from the policy, even if their allocated resources were insufficient to cover all the training needs, as human resource department would have identified the deviation before full implementation. The results align with McGovern *et al.*, (1997) who also attributed the inconsistency between prescribed and actual of LMs in HRM to monitoring problems.

## **7.8 Inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM due to the CSO's bureaucracy**

The study found that CSO's bureaucracy hindered LMs' involvement in TM, leading to an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM. The characteristics of CSO bureaucracy were evident in its conservative approach, which manifested itself in a lack of interest in innovative ideas, slow adaptation to change and strict adherence to rules and procedures. Due to this conservatism, LMs felt discouraged from devising modern and efficient ways to showcase, improve and manage talent, since their new ideas were quashed by superiors. Consequently, they became frustrated and were unable to perform their TM roles. This is corroborated by participants LM17, OF2 and SP8:

*“we are **overly conservative**, so to speak I think sometimes **we don't move with time**”*  
(LM17)

*“The **need to follow the human resource policies and procedures** in doing talent management activities that also is **barrier** because it **slows down the process** it even **takes away the innovation** that line managers can bring to talent management”* (OF2)

*“the **biggest challenge** that the managers face ... is when they **lack the buy-in from the authorities** ... so a manager might think that there is a particular direction that is supposed to be taken if the department is to ...succeed in terms of talent management ... but if **authorities do not think that way** then it means his efforts are going to be **frustrated**”* (SP8)

The results indicate that the bureaucratic nature of the CSO was evident in its conservative approach, resulting in a lack of interest in innovative ideas, a slow response to change and strict adherence to rules and procedures. This inhibited LMs' involvement in TM to the extent of creating an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM. This can be attributed to the fact that the CSO is a state bank, which, according to various scholars (Menzela 2009:3; Norris-Terrell and Clay 2010; Troshani *et al.*, 2011), is known for its bureaucratic tendencies characterised by conservatism and resistance to change, which contradicts the pursuit of innovative ideologies.

Besides, the bureaucratic nature of the CSO was evident in the authorities' unilateral decision-making regarding TM, and this denied LMs the opportunity to undertake their intended TM roles, such as proposing TM decisions. For example, there were instances where human resource department and executive management made TM decisions without involving LMs, as observed by participant LM4 below:

*“Sometimes you are given people that **do not fit** the requirements **of the job** and when you try to raise the issue with human resource, they say, it is the **executive management prerogative** so that sometimes affects our delivery” (LM4)*

The inconsistency between LMs’ prescribed and actual involvement in TM can therefore be explained by the bureaucratic nature of the CSO. This was evident in the unilateral decision-making by authorities regarding TM.

Finally, the CSO’s bureaucracy, reflected in a lack of empowerment of LMs when it came to TM matters, hindered their involvement in TM. This was primarily due to the fact that LMs’ authority in TM activities, such as talent development budgeting and performance management, was restricted to providing recommendations. These recommendations were then subject to review at multiple levels, specifically directors and the HR department, before receiving approval from executive management, as confirmed by SM2:

*“The most apparent **barrier** that they face is **lack of empowerment**. Yes, when I say **lack of empowerment** is because they are not empowered to **make their own decision** on an issue.” (SM2)*

The results indicate that the CSO’s bureaucracy, manifested in lack of LMs’ empowerment on TM matters, hindered LMs’ involvement in TM. This led to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM.

In summary, the findings suggest that the bureaucracy within the CSO is characterised by conservatism, which is evident in several ways: (1) a lack of interest in innovative ideas; (2) slow response to change; (3) strict adherence to rules and procedures; (4) unilateral TM decision by authorities; and (5) lack of LMs’ empowerment on TM matters. This bureaucracy hinders the involvement of LMs in TM, resulting in an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM. Consequently, it can be inferred that the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM stems from the lack of support for LMs in performing HRM work as a result of bureaucratic practices, and LMs’ lack of empowerment in TM matters (Cascon-Pereira *et al* 2006; Conway and Monks 2010:370; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014), and is categorised as an alignment problem (Teague and Roche 2012). According to Evans (2015), alignment problems occur when organisations fail to support LMs in their HRM responsibilities, resulting in an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in HRM. In this context, a lack of support for LMs in performing TM tasks –

the alignment problem – is evident in the CSO’s failure to provide a flexible and enabling environment for LMs to perform their prescribed TM tasks. This failure can be attributed to the CSO’s reluctance to loosen its bureaucratic practices. If the CSO had been more open to relaxing these, it would have fostered an atmosphere that allows LMs to showcase their creativity and innovation in performing TM, empowering them in their TM tasks. Additionally, it would have discouraged authorities from making unilateral TM decisions and strict adherence to policies and procedures.

### **7.9 Summary of LMs’ compromised involvement in TM due to internal factors (disposition of TM stakeholders, resource constraints and CSO’s bureaucracy)**

To that end, the previous section first established that internal forces such as delegation, problems, alignment problems and monitoring problems affected the involvement of LMs in TM. These problems created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. First, manifestation of internal forces was primarily observed in the disposition of TM stakeholders, specifically LMs’ lack of ownership in TM. This disposition of TM stakeholders was evident in various ways: (1) LMs’ reluctance to perform TM tasks, believing that TM is work for human resource department staff; (2) LMs’ reluctance to appraise employees for fear of being labelled as a bad manager; (3) prioritisation of core tasks over TM tasks; (4) LMs’ lack of TM knowledge; (5) office politics; (6) unilateral decision making by authorities; and (7) a weak connection between TM, performance management and job description.

Second, the internal factors manifested in resource constraints inhibited LMs’ involvement in TM to the extent of creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM.

Finally, the internal factors manifested in the CSO’s bureaucracy and reflected in conservatism; in strict adherence to policies and procedures; in unilateral TM decisions by authorities; and in a lack of empowerment of LMs in TM work; all precluded LMs’ involvement in TM, creating a further inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM.

In view of the above, LMs’ compromised involvement in TM due to internal contextual factors is summarised in Table 14 below.

**Table 15: Summary of LMs' compromised involvement in TM due to internal contextual factors**

No	Internal contextual barrier	Specific barrier	TM stakeholders					
			LM	HRD	OS	SRC	SM	Docs
1	Disposition of TM stakeholders' (precluded LMs' involvement in TM)	LMs lack TM ownership. • Failure to appraise staff for fear of being labelled a bad manager. TM viewed as HRD work	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
		Office Politics, • Subordinates had a good relationship with directors and gossiped LMs. • LMs lost respect from subordinates. • Missed TM opportunities due to poor relationships	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
		Unilateral TM decisions by directors. (This resulted in biases in TM decisions)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
2	Resource constraints (precluded LMs' involvement in TM)	Limited financial resource	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Shortage of human resources	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
3	CSO's bureaucracy (precluded LMs' involvement in TM)	Conservative behaviour, • lack of interest in innovative ideas, • sluggish response to change • strict adherence to rules and procedures	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
		Unilateral decisions by authorities	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No

**Key for TM stakeholders:** LM → Line Manager, HRD → Human Resource Department Staff, OS → Other Staff (Officers and Supervisors), SRC → Staff Representative Council, SM → Senior Management, Docs → Bank's documents; YES – stakeholder category mentioned factor; NO – No stakeholder mentioned the factor

Besides external and internal contextual factors which precluded the involvement of LMs in TM covered in the preceding section, the study uncovered internal and external contextual factors that facilitated LMs' involvement in TM. The subsequent section discusses external and contextual factors which inhibited and facilitated the involvement of LMs in TM.



## **7.10 TM stakeholder support for the TM programme facilitates consistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM**

The study found that the involvement of LMs in TM was made possible by the backing of various stakeholders: internal, such as executive management and human resource department; as well as external, such as the Malawi Government and international organisations including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.

The executive management within the CSO allocated funds to a talent development programme, allowing the LMs to empower their employees. From an administrative perspective, the executive management and HR department supported the LMs by providing them with TM tools, including a PMS, which facilitated their involvement in performance assessment. In particular, the PMS helped the LMs identify individuals who were underperforming, performing well or showing high potential, and to implement suitable measures to manage each group accordingly. Lastly, the HR department and executive management offered a LDP to the LMs, equipping them with TM knowledge and ultimately facilitating their active involvement in TM. This is confirmed by participants LM4, SP13, LM11:

*“we do get **some budget support** at the end of the year there **are allocations for training budget, for workshop and some for in-house**” (LM4)*

*“I can think of is **performance management system**, I think it helps managers in knowing who is **performing well** and who is **not performing properly**.” (SP13)*

*“I would say **the external consultant’s programme** that the bank provides managers. That could be one of the enablers because it **trains managers** a number of issues including **how to manage talent**” (LM11)*

The results reveal that internal stakeholders’ initiatives in relation to the TM programme, such as allocating budget for talent development, assigning LMs to the LDP and developing a PMS, facilitated the involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO.

Unfortunately, there were instances when the financial assistance provided by internal stakeholders was insufficient to fulfil all the capacity-building requirements. Consequently, external stakeholders, including the Malawi Government and international partner organisations such as the IMF and World Bank, had to step in to support the CSO by providing training scholarships, whether for a prolonged duration or a shorter period, as pointed out by participant LM2 in the extract provided below:

*“Stakeholder institutions like government has been offering scholarships, that's an enabler also foreign bilateral multilateral organisations like the IMF, the MEFMI, these are enablers...they provide both relevant courses but also the resources” (LM2)*

The findings demonstrate that external TM stakeholders, such as the government and IMF, facilitated the involvement of LMs in TM by offering scholarships for training purposes. There is conflicting evidence regarding the support received by LMs from relevant stakeholders in their HRM efforts. While some studies indicate that LMs lack support from stakeholders such as human resource department and executive management (Renwick 2003; McConville, 2006; Hutchinson and Purcell 2008:57; Hutchinson and Purcell, 2010; Evans 2015:466; McDermott *et al.*, 2015:826), there are other studies that partially confirm the support provided to LMs by human resource department in their TM roles (Boaden *et al.*, 2007; Wiblen and Marler, 2021:2608).

## **7.11 Summary of the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM due to external and internal contextual factors and empirical contribution**

### **7.11.1 Overall impact of contextual factors on LMs' involvement in TM**

Overall, the chapter showed that the interplay of institutional forces, such as coercive and mimetic isomorphism, manifested in low leadership independence and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic respectively; and internal factors, such as alignment, delegation and monitoring problems – showed up in the CSO's bureaucracy, the disposition of TM stakeholders and resource constraints respectively, impacted the involvement of LMs in TM. As result, this led to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. The claim is based on the following:

Firstly, concerning coercive isomorphism manifested in politics leading to low leadership independence (one of the external contextual factors), the study found that it affected the involvement of LMs in TM and created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement. The impact of low leadership independence was evident in several ways: (1) it led to the erratic implementation of LDP due to the change of consultants, so the TM expertise imparted to LMs was inconsistent, with some attending good sessions and others attending sessions which were average; (2) it led to an unstable PMS, resulting in LMs gaining less knowledge about it and impeding their involvement in performance management; and (3) it led to the cancellation of talent development, so that LMs could not undertake the prescribed talent development roles; and (4) it led to exclusion of LMs from the promotion process for some employees who had political connections, with the result that LMs could not nominate employees for consideration for promotion.

Secondly, regarding mimetic isomorphism manifested in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is one of the external contextual factors, the study revealed that the pandemic created an inconsistency between LM prescribed and actual involvement in TM, and its impact was evident in the following ways: (1) it led to the cancellation and suspension of TM programmes such as performance management, the talent development programme and talent acquisition; and (2) it caused sickness and deaths among employees. Consequently, LMs could not perform the prescribed TM roles (e.g. drawing up performance contracts; appraising staff; undertaking training needs analysis; nominating staff to attend training; participating in the LDP, which would have equipped them with TM expertise; identifying vacancies; drawing up job descriptions; and participating in selection interviews to recommend successful candidates for employment) for the entire isolation period.

Thirdly, concerning internal contextual factors such as the delegation, alignment and monitoring problems manifested in disposition of TM stakeholders, resource constraints and CSO bureaucracy, the study found that although they created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM, nevertheless TM stakeholders' support for TM reduced that inconsistency.

### **7.11.2 Claim for empirical contribution to knowledge.**

External forces, such as politics manifested in low leadership independence and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with internal forces, such as dispositions of TM stakeholders, resource constraints and the CSO's bureaucracy, impeded LMs' involvement in TM, creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. This finding is significant, as it responds to the call for more qualitative studies that provide an in-depth investigation of a variety of issues faced by LMs when implementing TM – particularly in the public sector, in a rapidly evolving context (Kravariti *et al.*, 2022:19). The claim is based on the fact that the results extend TM knowledge on LMs' involvement in TM in the under-studied context of the CSO. This was achieved by providing insights into a wide range of contextual factors affecting LMs' involvement in TM creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in the CSO. By opening the study's investigations to external contextual factors, particularly coercive institutional forces manifested in politics leading to low leadership independence, and mimetic institutional forces, manifested in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; alongside internal factors (e.g. delegation, alignment and monitoring problems manifested in disposition of TM stakeholders, resource constraints and the CSO's bureaucracy), the present study offers insights into a broad spectrum of factors affecting LMs' involvement in TM, all of which is a new addition to TM knowledge. This is because not many previous relevant studies considered politics manifested in low leadership independence and the impact of COVID-19 pandemic as being among the factors affecting LMs' involvement in TM, creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in an under-studied context, such as that of the CSO.

## **7.12 The generation of the coalesced framework for analysing prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM**

A closer look at the literature review in relation to the results presented in Chapters 6 and 7 reveals a coalesced framework resulting from the combination of FDF, TDF and institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). This unified framework analyses the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO. First, the claim is based on the fact that the study results show that FDF analysed the prescribed involvement dimension by providing the lenses to explain the answers to the questions on: (1) which TM practices LMs were involved? and (2) to what extent were LMs involved in TM practices? This is supported by the discussions of the study results along the following four dimensions of the framework.

### **7.12.1 Task dimension**

The study results indicate that LMs were involved in initiating multiple tasks of varied TM practices (e.g. initiating processes in talent acquisition and identification, hybrid talent development, performance management and the TM budget), as established in Chapter 6, sections 6.2-6.5. Further, the results indicate that LMs were involved in the implementation of TM decisions (e.g. ensuring that nominated employees attended their training, coaching, mentoring, endorsing employees' applications for self-initiated training and ensuring that there were no talent development budget overruns), as established in Chapter 6, sections 6.3.2.1, 6.3.3.1, 6.3.4 and 6.5. Both the initiation of TM tasks and implementation of TM decisions align with the FDF task responsibility dimension, which profiles involvement at the task operational level when the involvement of LMs is limited to performing operational tasks and not decision-making (Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; Budhwar 2000a; Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). In addition, in terms of coverage, the dimension explains why LMs were more involved in operational tasks (Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Against this background, the task dimension of FDF provided the medium for explaining the coverage/operational level of LMs' involvement in TM in the CSO.

### **7.12.2 Decision-making power dimension.**

The study results indicate that LMs were involved in proposing TM decisions in several TM practices (e.g. talent acquisition and identification, hybrid talent development, performance management and TM budget), as established in Chapter 6, sections 6.2-6.5.

Proposing TM decisions align with the decision-making power dimension of FDF (Budhwar and Sparrow 1997; Budhwar 2000a; Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Addressing the question of who holds the primary responsibility for HRM decision-making between LMs and HRM specialists/senior management, the study results reveal that decision-making power was shared, but LMs were not primarily responsible for decision-making (Budhwar 2000a; Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Consequently, the extent of LMs' involvement in TM decision-making was moderate (Budhwar 2000a; Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014). Given the above, the decision-making power dimension of FDF guided the explanation of the extent of (or the depth of) LMs' involvement in TM decision-making, within the CSO context.

### **7.12.3 Financial power dimension**

The results show that LMs proposed a talent development budget that was approved by authorities. Once the budget was approved, LMs were involved in ensuring that their spending was within the allocated budget to avoid budget overruns, as established in Chapter 6, section 6.5. The task performed by LMs in terms of the TM budget aligns with the HRM financial dimension of FDF. However, in line with the framework's guidance, the extent of their involvement was moderate, as LMs only proposed budgets for talent development (McConville and Holden 1999; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006:136; Cascon-Pereira 2014; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015). Given the above, the financial power dimension of FDF helped to explain the extent of LMs' involvement in financial power.

### **7.12.4 Acquisition of TM expertise dimension**

The study results show that LMs participated in a LDP that equipped them with TM expertise. The effectiveness of the LDP received mixed reviews, as established in Chapter 6, section 6.3.2.1. LMs' participation in the LDP aligns with the HRM expertise dimension of FDF, which asserts that LMs' involvement in HRM is facilitated through the provision of LM-HRM training, thus empowering them with TM knowledge and skills (Budhwar 2000b; Cascon-Pereira *et al.*, 2006; Gautam and Davis 2007; Cascon-Pereira and Valverde 2014; Azmi and Mushtaq 2015). As regards the extent of acquisition of TM expertise by LMs, the results indicate that there were mixed reviews. This suggests that acquisition of TM expertise by LMs was moderate, as it was neither effective nor ineffective (Cascon-

Pereira and Valverde 2014). Accordingly, the LMs-HRM training dimension of FDF was helpful in explaining the involvement of LMs in acquisition of TM expertise.

However, the study results do not provide evidence that FDF analysed the actual involvement of LMs in TM dimension, confirming the framework's limitation of not going beyond the analysis of the prescribed involvement of LMs in the TM dimension.

Second, the claim rests on the fact that the study results show that TDF addressed the limitations of FDF by analysing the actual involvement of LMs in the TM dimension. This was accomplished by providing an explanation as to why the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM differed. This is evidenced by the discussions of the study results along the following three dimensions of the framework.

#### **7.12.5 Delegation dimension**

The study results show that the disposition of TM stakeholders manifested in (1) LMs' reluctance to appraise staff for fear of being labelled as bad managers; (2) LMs' prioritisation of core tasks at the expense of TM tasks; and (3) LMs' reluctance to perform TM work, because they viewed it as the preserve of human resource department staff, inhibited LMs' involvement in TM. These led to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM (see Chapter 7, section 7.6). The study findings fall within the delegation dimension of TDF. The claim is based on the fact that the study findings, such as: (1) LMs' reluctance to appraise staff for fear of being labelled a bad manager; (2) LMs' prioritisation of core tasks at the expense of TM tasks; and (3) LMs' reluctance to perform TM work in the belief that it was work for human resource department staff; aligns with the delegation dimension characteristics, namely LMs' self-serving behaviour, lack of motivation to perform TM tasks and varied opinion between LMs and key TM stakeholders on delegation of TM work to LMs, respectively. This creates an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. Given the above, the delegation dimension of TDF was helpful in explaining the causes of the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO.

### **7.12.6 Alignment dimension**

The study findings indicate that LMs acquired TM expertise through attending the LDP. However, reviews of the programme's effectiveness were mixed, as some felt that it was effective, while others felt that it was not (see Chapter 6, section 6.3.2). Consistent with the findings, the study results further show that the disposition of TM stakeholders manifested in LMs' lack of TM knowledge led to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM (see Chapter 7, Section 7.6). In addition, the study results indicate that disposition of TM stakeholders manifested in office politics and unilateral decision making by authorities also created an inconsistency (see Chapter 7, Section 7.6). Furthermore, the study results show that the CSO's bureaucracy manifested in conservative behaviour characterised by strict adherence to rules and procedures, slow response to change and lack of interest in innovative ideas, and LMs lack of empowerment, inhibited LMs' involvement in TM, thus leading to yet another inconsistency (see Chapter 7, Section 7.8). Finally, the study results indicate that resource constraints precluded LMs' involvement in TM, leading to yet more inconsistency (see Chapter 7, section 7.7). These findings fall within TDF's alignment dimension, which claims that lack of support for LMs in performing HRM leads to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM. In the CSO context, lack of support for LMs is evident in resource constraints, lack of TM knowledge due to insufficient LMs-TM as indicated by some participants that the LDP programme was inadequate. Additionally, a lack of support for LMs is evident in CSOs' failure to provide a flexible and enabling environment for LMs to perform their prescribed TM tasks. This failure is attributed to the CSO's reluctance to loosen its bureaucratic practices. If the CSO had been more open to relaxing its bureaucratic practices, it would have fostered an atmosphere that allows LMs to showcase their creativity and innovation in performing TM, empowering them in their TM tasks. Additionally, it would have discouraged authorities from making unilateral TM decisions and discouraged strict adherence to policies and procedures. Given the above, the alignment dimension of TDF was helpful in explaining the cause of the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO.



### **7.12.7 Monitoring dimension**

The study results show that the disposition of the TM stakeholders was manifested in a lack of TM ownership by LMs. This was mainly because there was a weak link between TM tasks and the job description and performance contract of the LMs, causing TM work to be perceived as unimportant. Consequently, the absence of consequences for not completing TM work resulted in LMs avoiding such tasks, leading to an inconsistency between their prescribed and actual involvement in TM (see Chapter 7, section 7.6). Additionally, the results indicate that LMs deviated from the talent development budget policy in part due to a lack of human resource department enforcement of the policy (see Chapter 7, Section 7.7). The study results fall within the TDF's monitoring dimension, which claims that lack of TM monitoring mechanisms on LMs' HRM work leads to an inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. The claim rests on the following reasons. First, the weak connection between LMs' TM tasks, job description and performance contract make monitoring of LMs' involvement in TM a challenge, as there is no basis for taking such an action. Second, if human resource department consistently monitored the implementation of the revised talent development budget, LMs would have been deterred from deviating from the policy, even if their resource allocation was insufficient to cover all the training needs, as the human resource department would have identified this before being implemented. Finally, the human resource department's failure to enforce the deadline for LMs' submission of TM work demonstrates a lack of TM monitoring. Thus, the monitoring dimension of TDF helped to explain the causes of the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM.

However, no evidence is present in the study to claim that TDF analysed the external contextual factors. This confirms the framework's limitation of not going beyond analysing the external contextual factors that inhibit LMs to the extent that an inconsistency arises between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM.

Third, the claim rests on the fact that the study results show that institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) effectively addressed the limitations of FDF and TDF, i.e. of failing to analyse the external aspect of the actual dimension of involvement of LMs in TM. Institutional isomorphism, on the other hand, addressed these limitations by analysing the actual involvement dimension from the external institutional perspective. As a result, the analysis provided an extended explanation for why the actual involvement differs from the intended involvement, particularly due to external institutional forces. This is evidenced by the discussions of the study results in line with institutional isomorphism.

#### **7.12.8 Coercive isomorphism**

The study findings reveal that politics manifested in low leadership independence inhibited LMs' involvement in TM. This created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. The reason for this is attributed to the change in government, which brought about a change in leadership at the CSO that aimed to promote the political agenda of the new administration. Consequently, in the pursuit of this political agenda, TM programmes were altered or discontinued. When such changes occurred, LMs were unable to fulfil their prescribed TM roles, resulting in an inconsistency between their prescribed actual involvement in TM (Chapter 7, section 7.2). The study results fall within the coercive isomorphism which argues that organisations' operations are influenced by both formal and informal pressures imposed on them by other organisations on which they depend (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150). The pressure in question can be the need to comply with employment laws, persuasion or complying to government mandate (DiMaggio and Powell 1983:150; Thunnissen and Buttiens 2017:395). In this context, the inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM can be attributed to coercive forces characterised by low leadership independence manifested in the political agenda emerging from the executive arm of the government, on which the CSO depended, as discussed in Section 7.2. Given the above, the coercive isomorphism helped to explain the external causes of the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO.

### **7.12.9 Mimetic isomorphism**

The study results show that the COVID-19 pandemic inhibited LMs' involvement in TM. As a result, there was an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. This arose because the CSO, faced with the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, had no choice but to copy successful COVID-19 response strategies from other organisations. These strategies included measures like remote work for some employees to reduce office overcrowding and the cancellation of TM programmes such as talent development and performance management systems, among others. Consequently, LMs failed to perform their prescribed TM roles, leading to inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM (see Chapter 7, section 7.3). The study results fall within the mimetic isomorphism which argues that institutional forces affect organisations to the extent that they are left ignorant of the processes or strategies that might lead them to desired outcomes, and consequently compel them to copy strategies from a successful organisation to survive (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) (detailed explanation provided in Section 7.3). Against this background, mimetic isomorphism was helpful in explaining the external causes of the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO.

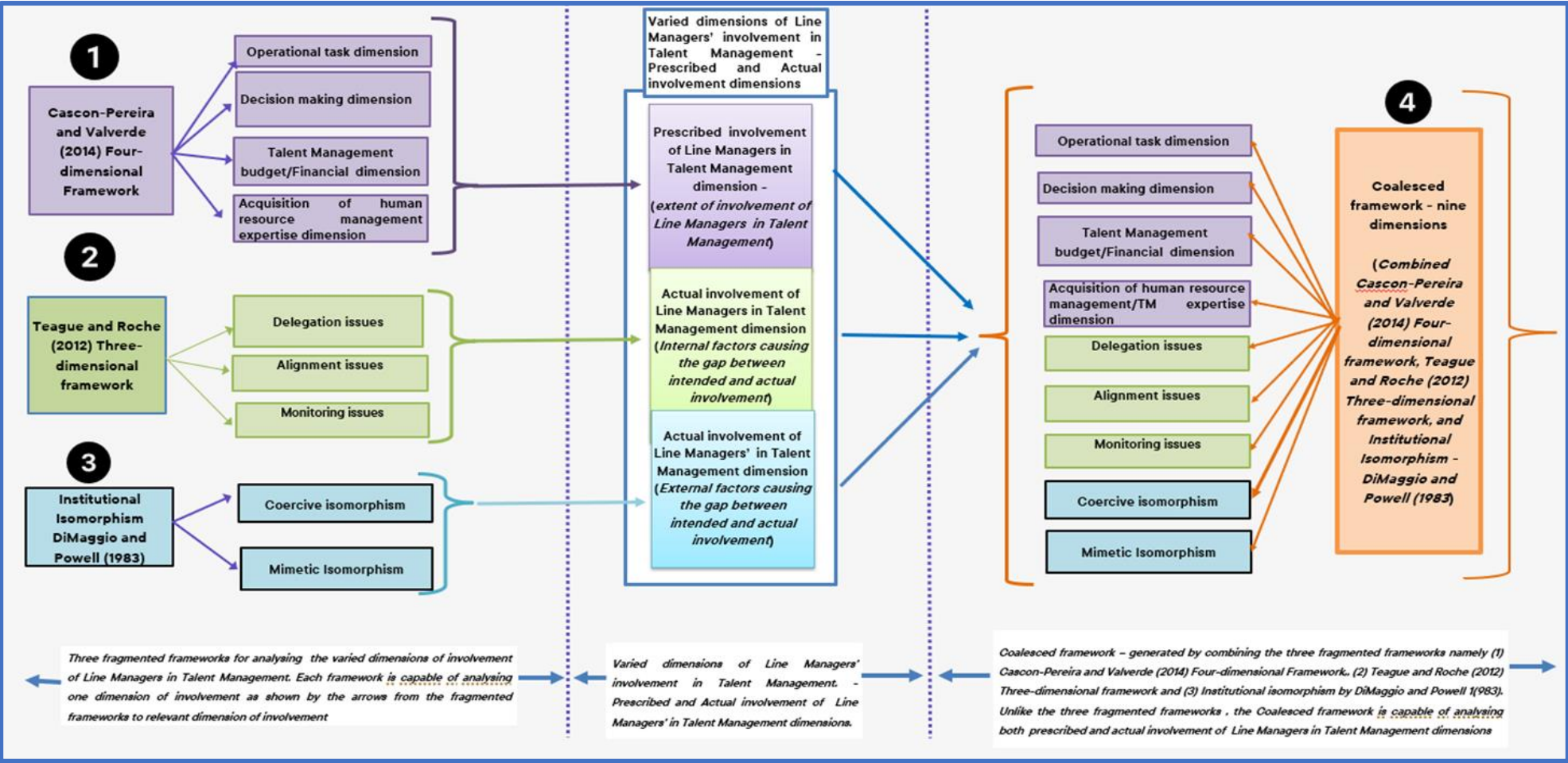
Given the above, the study results revealed a coalesced framework resulting from a combination of FDF, TDF and institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). This unified framework analysed the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO. The resulting coalesced framework encompassed the following dimensions: task/operational, decision-making power, TM expertise, financial power, delegation, alignment, monitoring and institutional isomorphism, as illustrated in Table 14 below. To illustrate the way in which the coalesced framework was generated a pictorial representation is Figure 12 following Table 15.

**Table 16: Coalesced framework for analysing the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM**

No	Name of existing frameworks	The framework dimension(s)	Empirical Evidence from the study	Remark(s)/Interpretation
1	Cascon-Pereira and Valverde (2014) Four-Dimensional Framework	<b>Task Dimension</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It relates to operational tasks. More involvement in operational tasks entails performing more tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LMs initiated TM practices (e.g. talent acquisition and identification, hybrid talent development, performance management, and TM budget) – see Chapter 6 sections, 6.2-6.5).</li> <li>LMs implemented TM decisions (e.g. ensured that nominated employees attended their training, coaching,) see Chapter 6, Sections 6.3, 6.5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LMs' Initiation and implementation of TM decision are all operational tasks. This entails that LMs were more involved in terms of coverage due to the number of operational tasks performed. (The task dimension provided the lens for interpreting the level of involvement of LMs in TM in terms of coverage)</li> </ul>
		<b>Decision making Power Dimension</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making decision alone entails high involvement.</li> <li>Proposing decision entails moderate involvement</li> <li>Not involved in decision making entails less involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LMs proposed TM decisions in several TM practices (e.g. talent acquisition and identification, hybrid talent development, performance management, and TM budget)-see Chapter 6, Sections 6.2-6.5.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposing TM decisions falls within the decision-making power dimension. This entails that LMs were moderately involved in TM decision. (Decision making power dimension provided the lens for interpreting the level of involvement of LMs in TM in terms of depth)</li> </ul>
		<b>HRM Expertise Dimension</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LMs' involvement in HRM is facilitated by human resource management training provided to LMs.</li> <li>Lack of LMs HRM training entails LMs' involvement in HRM will be affected negatively due to lack of knowledge.</li> <li>Insufficient/ineffective HRM training entails low involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LMs participated in a LDP that provided them with TM expertise, among other things. The effectiveness of the LDP had mixed reviews –(see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LMs' participation in LDP falls within the HRM expertise dimension. The extent of acquisition of expertise was moderate due to mixed results on its adequacy. (HRM expertise provided the lens for interpreting the level of involvement of LMs in TM in terms of expertise)</li> </ul>
		<b>Financial Power Dimension</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LMs' involvement in TM is facilitated by their participation in HRM budget.</li> <li>More decision making power entails more involvement in TM budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LMs proposed a talent development budget. LMs monitored implementation of talent development budget-(see Chapter 6, Section 6.5).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposing talent development budget falls within the financial power dimension. This entails that LMs level of involvement was moderate. (Financial power provided the means for interpreting the level of involvement of LMs in TM in TM budget)</li> </ul>
2	Teague and Roche (2012) Three-Dimensional Framework	<b>Delegation Dimension</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Varied opinions between LMs and key HRM stakeholders on HRM work,</li> <li>LMs prioritisation of core tasks over HRM due to lack of motivation,</li> <li>LMs workload,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disposition of TM stakeholders manifested in LMs' reluctance to appraise staff for fear of being labelled as a bad manager, reluctance of LMs to perform TM work as TM was viewed as an HR work, and LMs' prioritisation of core tasks at the expense of TM tasks, created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM (see Chapter 7 section 7.6).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The disposition of TM stakeholders manifested in LMs reluctance to perform HR work, LMs prioritisation of core tasks at the expense of TM tasks, falls within the delegation dimension.</li> </ul>

No	Name of existing frameworks	The framework dimension(s)	Empirical Evidence from the study	Remark(s)/Interpretation
	<b>Internal aspect of actual dimension of involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LMs role conflict,</li> <li>Time pressure to perform TM tasks,</li> <li>LMs self-serving behaviour (lead to creation of a gap between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM)</li> </ul>		<i>(Delegation dimension provided the means for interpreting the causes of the gap between intended and prescribed involvement of LMs in TM)</i>
		<b>Alignment Dimension</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of support for LMs leads to an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in HRM.</li> <li>Lack of support to LMs can take varied forms, among other things, resource constraints, inadequate LMs-TM training, lack of knowledge, and restrictive policies which promote bureaucracy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mixed reviews on the effectiveness of the LDP -see Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2; Disposition of TM stakeholders manifested in LMs' lack of TM knowledge -see Chapter 7, Section 7.6.; CSO' bureaucracy-see Chapter 7, section 7.8); Resource constraints - see Chapter 7, Section 7.7, office politics and unilateral decision making by authorities without involving LMs ( see Chapter 7, Section 7.6) – All the factors created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mixed reviews on the effectiveness of LDP, disposition of TM stakeholder, CSO' bureaucracy and resource constraints, office politics and unilateral decision making by authorities fall within the alignment dimension. <i>(The alignment dimension provided the means for interpreting the causes of the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM)</i></li> </ul>
		<b>Monitoring Dimension</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of monitoring of how LMs perform HRM work creates an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disposition of TM stakeholders manifested in LMs' lack of TM ownership due to weak linkage between job description, PMS, and performance contract created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO (-see Chapter 7, Section 7.6).</li> <li>LMs deviation from the talent development budget policy in part due to a lack of HRD enforcement of the policy created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO (see Chapter 7, Section 7.7)</li> <li>HRD's lack of enforcement of the submission deadline of TM work by LMs (see Chapter 7, Section 7.6)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disposition of TM stakeholders manifested in LMs lack of TM ownership, LMs deviation from the policy falls within the monitoring dimension. <i>(The monitoring dimension provided the means for interpreting the causes of the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM)</i></li> </ul>
3	<b>Institutional isomorphism of institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell 1983)</b>	<b>Coercive isomorphism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal and informal pressures imposed on organisations by other organisations on which they depend in the same field. The pressure requires organisations to comply with employment laws, persuasion, or an invitation to join a coalition or government mandate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The influence of politics manifested in low leadership independence resulted in inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO (see Chapter 7, Section, 7.2).</li> <li>The influence of legal factors affected the involvement of LMs in TM (see Chapter 7, Section 7.4).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Politics manifested in low leadership independence, falls within the coercive isomorphism and caused an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO. <i>(Coercive isomorphism provided the means for interpreting the cause of inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM)</i></li> </ul>
	<b>External aspects of actual dimension of involvement</b>	<b>Mimetic isomorphism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institutional pressures affecting organisations to the extent that they have no idea about the processes or strategies that could lead them to the desired outcomes, consequently, compel them to copy strategies of a successful organisation in order to survive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The COVID-19 pandemic compelled CSOs to copy response strategies that proved successful in well-known organisations. The copied response strategies led to the cancellation and suspension of TM programmes which in turn created an inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO (see Chapter 7, Sections 7.3.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COVID-19 pandemic falls within the mimetic isomorphism of institutional isomorphism and caused an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO. <i>(Mimetic isomorphism provided the means for interpreting the cause of inconsistency between the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM)</i></li> </ul>

**Figure 11: Coalesced framework generated by combing three fragmented frameworks to analyse prescribed and actual involvement dimensions.**





### **7.12.10 Claim for theoretical contribution**

The generation of a coalesced framework holds significant importance, as it provides a valuable theoretical contribution to the existing literature on fragmented frameworks for analysing LMs' involvement in TM, particularly at prescribed and actual levels of involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO. The claim rests on the fact that the study has extended the boundaries of using institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), FDF and TDF by combining them to create a coalesced framework. This framework serves as the lens for analysing two aspects: (1) the extent to which LMs are involved in TM practices; and (2) the causes of the gap between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO. It is important to note that institutional isomorphism, FDF and TDF, when used individually, cannot comprehensively analyse both prescribed and actual dimensions of involvement in a single study. Therefore, the results confirm that the strength of FDF lies in its ability to analyse the prescribed involvement dimension, which is the limitation of TDF and institutional isomorphism (*ibid.*). Conversely, the strength of TDF lies in its ability to assess the internal aspects of the actual involvement dimension, which is the limitation of FDF and institutional isomorphism (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the strength of institutional isomorphism (*ibid.*) lies in its ability to analyse external aspects of actual involvement of LMs in TM, which is the limitation of FDF and TDF.

### **7.13 Chapter summary**

The chapter presented and discussed the theme entitled “the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM due to contextual factors” which was generated consistent with the research question: Which factors facilitated and inhibited LMs' involvement in TM? Key takeaways on the theme were: first, the external forces manifested in politics leading to low leadership independence, the COVID-19 pandemic, labour legislation – coupled with internal forces manifested in disposition of TM stakeholders, resource constraints and the CSO's bureaucracy – precluded LMs' involvement in TM, creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. Second, TM stakeholders' support facilitated the involvement of LMs in TM. Finally, the chapter generated a coalesced framework for analysing the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM.

The next chapter provides the conclusion of the study, contributions to knowledge and implications for future research and reflexivity.

## **Chapter 8: Conclusions, Contributions and Future Research**

### **8.1 Introduction**

Consistent with the previous chapters, this chapter aims to summarise the research results and provide empirical, theoretical, methodological and managerial contributions, research limitations and recommendations for future research. To achieve this, the first section delineates the study's aim and research questions. It also offers a concise overview of the research methodology employed. The subsequent section presents the key research outcomes pertaining to each research question. Following that, the second section highlights the empirical and theoretical contributions of the study, followed by methodological and managerial contributions. Lastly, the chapter concludes with an examination of the study's limitations and a set of recommendations for future research endeavours.

### **8.2 Research aim, research questions and research findings**

This study aimed to examine LMs' involvement in TM in the CSO. To achieve that goal, the study was guided by the following three research questions:

- (1) How is talent understood and managed through the lens of TM philosophy?
- (2) How are LMs involved in TM?
- (3) Which factors preclude or facilitate LMs' involvement in TM?

Consistent with the nature of the study aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of LMs' involvement in the CSO, the study was guided by an interpretive research philosophy and inductive research approach. Employing an embedded single case study research strategy, qualitative data were collected through in-depth one-on-one semi-structured interviews conducted with forty-seven (47) key stakeholders at different levels (e.g. LMs, human resource department staff, SM, supervisors, officers and the SRC). To select participants, non-probability sampling techniques such as purposive and quota sampling were used. Additionally, the interviews were complemented by analysis of secondary data, such as job descriptions and policies, among other documents. The data were then analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Accordingly, the study results are presented in line with the following research questions.



***RQ1. How is talent understood and managed through the lens of TM philosophy?***

The study found that the CSO had varied definitions of talent whose further analysis led to two definitions, namely: (1) talent as attributes possessed by people, with “tech-savvy” individuals dominating the attributes due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic; and (2) talent as a few elite employees who excelled in performance and who had the potential to repeat the same results in higher positions in the future. In addition, both definitions of talent were perceived as flexible and shaped by two opposing contextual forces (e.g. pressure to fulfil the CSO’s mandate of maintaining the country’s price and financial stability vs. non-profit making, lack of competition and state elements). Finally, consistent with these varied definitions of talent, the CSO adopted a hybrid TM philosophy that included an exclusive key position TM philosophy and an inclusive self-initiated talent development TM philosophy to manage few elite employees and non-elite employees, respectively.

***RQ2. How are LMs involved in TM?***

The study found that “LMs initiated, proposed and implemented TM decisions, and acquired TM expertise”. This means that the overall level of LMs’ involvement in TM was moderate, which was neither less nor high. Similarly, overall, LMs’ were moderately involved both in the exclusive key position TM philosophy and the inclusive TM philosophy. This means that, according to the TM philosophy, there were no differences in the level of LMs’ involvement. The claim for moderate LMs’ involvement in TM is based on the results of LMs’ combined involvement in TM tasks, TM decisions, TM budget and TM expertise of TM practices. First, LMs were highly involved in TM operational tasks as they performed several operational tasks (e.g. initiating TM processes and implementing TM decisions) in several TM practices. Second, LMs were moderately involved in the decision-making process, as they proposed decisions across TM practices. Third, LMs had moderate financial power, as they proposed budgets for talent development. Finally, LMs were moderately involved in TM expertise, as they attended TM training that received mixed reviews. Taken together, LMs’ high involvement in TM operational tasks was supported by moderate decision-making power, moderate financial power and moderate TM expertise, ultimately resulting in an overall moderate involvement in TM. However, there were differences in the level of LMs’ involvement per TM practice. LMs were less

involved in talent acquisition and identification and in performance management practices, and moderately involved in talent development practice and the TM budget process.

Secondly, the moderate involvement of LMs in TM was motivated by the CSO's quest to enhance TM effectiveness through LMs' knowledge of the workforce, due to the proximity they had to employees, which put them in an advantageous position. In addition, it was motivated by the desire of the CSO to ensure fairness and equity in the process, through providing checks and balances in the TM processes.

Thirdly, there were mixed perceptions as to whether the extent of LMs' involvement in TM would change in the future. Some expected it to change due to the instability of the environment, while others did not expect any change, due to the CSO's bureaucracy's tendency to resist change.

Finally, LMs used common management strategies, namely prioritisation, delegation and time management to align core and TM tasks. Yet, LMs often prioritised core tasks over TM tasks because the former was tied to recognition, such as promotions and merit.

### ***RQ3. Which factors preclude and facilitate the involvement of LMs in TM?***

The study found that institutional forces manifested in external forces (e.g. coercive isomorphism manifested in politics leading to low leadership independence, and mimetic isomorphism manifested in the impact of COVID-19 pandemic), and alignment, delegation and monitoring problems reflected in internal forces (e.g. resource constraints, disposition of TM stakeholders and CSO's bureaucracy) hampered LMs' involvement in TM, creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. In addition, TM stakeholders' support provided to LMs facilitated their involvement in TM. Finally, the study generated a coalesced framework that resulted from the combination of institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), FDF and TDF that assessed the prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO.

## 8.4 Empirical and theoretical contributions to knowledge

The thesis contributes to knowledge in several ways.

Firstly, the thesis makes an empirical contribution to TM knowledge by responding to calls from several scholars for an in-depth study on the involvement of LMs in TM in under-studied national and industrial contexts (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen 2016; Anlesinya *et al.*, 2019; Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.*, 2020; Kravariti *et al.*, 2022); involvement of LMs in several HRM practices (Tyskbo 2020:836); and for qualitative studies that provide an in-depth look at a variety of issues faced by LMs when implementing TM in the public sector in a rapidly evolving context (Kravariti *et al.*, 2022:19). The claim is based on the following facts.

First, the study extends TM knowledge on LMs' involvement in TM by providing insights into the level of LMs' involvement in TM in a CSO an under-studied context characterised by politics manifested in low leadership independence, and affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, among other things. The level of involvement was based on the results of LMs' combined involvement in varied dimensions, namely: TM tasks, TM decisions, TM budget and TM expertise of TM practices. In addition, the study examined the reasons for the level of involvement of LMs in TM; the way in which LMs align core and TM tasks; and whether the level of involvement would remain the same or change in the future. By examining LMs' involvement in TM in CSO through these multiple lenses, the present study provides a realistic, comprehensive, deep and balanced insight into the extent of LMs' involvement in TM in CSO an under-explored context which is new to TM knowledge, as previous studies lack that in-depth and broad examination of the topic, particularly in underexplored national and industrial contexts such as those of the CSO.

Second, on the one hand, the study extends TM knowledge on LMs' involvement in TM by providing insights into the extent of their involvement according to individual TM philosophy in CSO, an underexplored context. The study found that CSO managed its employees with a hybrid TM philosophy, comprising an exclusive key position TM philosophy and an inclusive self-initiated talent development TM philosophy. Furthermore, the study found that, overall, LMs were moderately involved in both TM philosophies, implying that the extent of their involvement in the TM philosophies was the same. By extending the examination of LMs' involvement in TM to compare the extent of their involvement in the individual TM philosophy within a hybrid TM philosophy, the study

offers novelty in TM knowledge, as not many relevant previous studies have taken this into account, particularly in under-studied national and industrial contexts such as the CSO. On the other hand, the study extends TM knowledge of LMs' involvement in TM by providing insights into the extent of their involvement according to TM practices: the study found that there were differences in the level of LMs' involvement in TM practices. LMs were less involved in talent acquisition and identification, and performance management practices, and moderately involved in talent development practice and the TM budget process. By extending the examination of LMs' involvement in TM to compare the extent of their involvement according to TM practice, the study offers novelty in TM knowledge, as not many previous studies have taken this into account, particularly in under-studied national and industrial contexts such as the CSO.

Third, the study extends TM knowledge on LMs' involvement in TM by providing insights into a wide range of contextual factors affecting LMs' involvement in TM, creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. The study found that institutional forces such as coercive isomorphism, manifested in politics leading to low leadership independence, and mimetic isomorphism, manifested in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, respectively, coupled with internal contextual factors, such as delegation, alignment and monitoring problems manifested in CSO's bureaucracy, TM stakeholders' disposition, and resource constraints, respectively, prevented LMs' involvement in TM. As a result, both external and internal contextual forces created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in CSO. By opening the study's investigations to institutional external contextual factors, particularly coercive isomorphism manifested in politics leading to low leadership independence, and mimetic isomorphism manifested in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic alongside internal factors, the present study offers insights into a broad spectrum of factors affecting LMs' involvement in TM which is a new addition to TM knowledge. This is because not many previous relevant studies considered politics manifested in low leadership independence and the impact of COVID-19 pandemic as factors affecting LMs' involvement in TM creating an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in understudied contexts such as the CSO.

Secondly, the thesis makes an empirical contribution to TM knowledge, as it responds to the call of Kwon and Jang (2021:110) for more studies examining the way in which inclusive TM philosophy is institutionalised in an exclusive TM philosophy within an organisation. The assertion is based on the fact that the thesis extends TM knowledge by providing an insight into the way in which inclusive TM philosophy is integrated into the exclusive key position TM philosophy resulting in hybrid TM philosophy. The result that the CSO supported its employees including those outside key positions who wished to advance their careers through formal education in order to obtain the necessary qualifications which, together with other factors such as experience and performance, qualified them for promotion to key positions, is an important finding. This is because it provides insight into the means by which inclusive TM can be combined with exclusive TM, which not many previous studies have considered.

Finally, the study makes a theoretical contribution to the literature on fragmented frameworks for assessing the dimensions of involvement of LMs in TM (e.g. prescribed and actual involvement). The claim rests on the fact that the study has extended the boundaries of using institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), FDF and TDF by bringing them together to create a coalesced framework to provide the lens for explaining the extent to which LMs were involved in TM practices and the causes of the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO.

## **8.5 Methodological contributions**

The thesis makes methodological contributions in several ways.

Firstly, the thesis makes a methodological contribution through the adopted study methodology, that (1) responds to the call by Cooke (2018:11) and Cooke *et al.* (2022) for an in-depth human-centred qualitative research study; (2) responds to the call by Gallardo-Gallardo *et al.* (2020:463) for multi-stakeholder perspective studies of LMs' involvement in TM; and (3) responds to the call of Tyskbo (2020:836) for a study of LMs' involvement in HRM using a multi-stakeholder approach, with LMs as the main actor dominating the stakeholders. The claim rests on the fact that the study provides a deep, comprehensive and balanced insight into LMs' involvement in TM in CSO. This is because the study results were based on an embedded single case study research strategy that relied on a qualitative research type, an inductive approach and data collected by conducting one-on-one semi-

structured interviews with forty-seven (47) multi-stakeholders, namely SM, HR staff, officers, supervisors, LMs and SRC, with LMs dominating the stakeholders numerically.

Secondly, the thesis makes a methodological contribution, as it provides insights into lived experience of qualitative data collection during COVID-19 pandemic. The data collection exercise was conducted through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with forty-seven (47) multi-stakeholders at the time the COVID-19 pandemic was at its peak in Malawi, Africa. Apart from adhering to well-known academic data collection protocols, the study had to comply with COVID-19 protocols and identified strategies to address challenges posed by the impact of the pandemic. The study's data collection conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic therefore offers a unique and distinct lived experience, which brings new information to research design and methodology. This is because not many relevant previous studies collected their data by conducting face to face interviews at the time the COVID-19 pandemic was at its peak, particularly in under-studied contexts like the CSO.

## **8.6 Research contributions – Managerial**

The study aimed to contribute to the deeper academic understanding of LMs' involvement in TM in the CSO. The study results, however, revealed bottlenecks associated with implementation of TM through the lens of LMs that have implications for the effectiveness of TM programme. Therefore, consistent with findings on these bottlenecks, the study provides the following managerial contributions and its implications that executive management and human resource department staff of the CSO may need to consider.

First, the study findings indicate that TM within the CSO is not fully developed since it is implemented through the HRM scheme. This configuration presents various challenges that can impede effective TM implementation. Firstly, this setup risks diluting TM's strategic focus, as HRM scheme may not prioritise aligning TM with the CSO's goals and objectives. Consequently, TM efforts may lack strategic direction and fail to address critical talent needs, potentially leading to reduced employee engagement and motivation. This was evident in employees below key positions as they perceived that the CSO favoured those in key positions, despite offering development opportunities through self-initiated TM philosophy as evidenced by the study findings. Secondly, this configuration may lead to resistance from LMs towards TM activities, perceiving them as additional burdens or

responsibilities. Without active involvement of LMs, TM initiatives may not be effectively implemented at the operational level. This reluctance was evident in findings indicating that LMs felt TM activities were the responsibility of the human resource department staff, leading to hesitance in their involvement. Given these challenges, it is recommended that the CSO consider divorcing TM from the HRM scheme and establishing an independent TM scheme. This would involve developing a dedicated TM strategy that clearly outlines its alignment with the strategic goals of the organisation as well as its operationalisation. The implication of this proposal is that the CSO may need to allocate human resources dedicated to steering and sustaining the TM scheme, ensuring its effectiveness and long-term viability.

Second, study findings reveal that the CSO employs a hybrid TM philosophy, which combines an exclusive key position TM philosophy with an inclusive self-initiated TM philosophy. Literature suggests that hybrid TM philosophies are advantageous for generating synergies that individual TM philosophies alone cannot achieve. The exclusive key position TM philosophy views talent as rare and exclusive, often acquired through external recruitment for key positions. While this approach may be cost-effective, it runs the risk of demotivating existing employees who may feel overlooked for external talent. Moreover, it can be unreliable in sectors like the Malawian banking industry, which faces talent shortages, especially when seeking talent for the CSO. On the flip side, the self-initiated talent development TM philosophy perceives talent as developable and focuses on nurturing internal talent for key positions. Although this approach carries the risk of talent leaving after significant investment, it is praised for motivating employees and addressing talent shortages with readily available internal talent. To maximise synergy from the hybrid TM philosophy, the CSO may consider intensifying talent development efforts aligned with targeted key positions. This should be followed with filling the key positions with the internal developed talent. To mitigate the risk of talent attrition, the CSO should continue implementing retention strategies for key positions, as these strategies foster continued commitment from talents as evidenced from the study findings. Yet, implementing this proposal may require allocating additional financial resources to support talent development needs and existing retention strategies, which could be challenging considering existing financial constraints experienced by the CSO as evidenced by the study's findings. However, there is potential to leverage internal talents who possess knowledge and skills to develop and deliver programmes at a lower cost compared to external consultants. Therefore, empowering internal talents to participate in talent

development initiatives can help achieve intensified talent development at a reasonable cost. In this regard, in addition to limited financial resources, it can take advantage of the expertise that it has to assist in the development and facilitation of internal programmes. Moreover, this would be very relevant as employees would be taught relevant issues to the key positions in the CSO.

Third, the study findings indicate that often, LMs prioritised core tasks over TM tasks because the former were tied to recognition initiatives such as promotions and merit payment. As such, LMs felt more obliged to complete core tasks than TM tasks, since failure to complete core tasks risked their chances of recognition. Consequently, LMs ensured that core tasks were often prioritised at the expense of TM tasks. In addition, the study results indicate that LMs were reluctant to perform TM tasks because they believed TM is work for human resource department (see Chapter 6. Section 6.7). From the findings it can be deduced that the LMs lacked TM ownership. Given the above, the CSO may consider strengthening TM ownership by LMs by strongly tying TM tasks to recognition initiatives such as promotions and merit payment, similar to how it is done for core LMs tasks (McGovern *et al.*, 1997). This can be achieved by strongly linking TM tasks to LMs' job description and performance contract and using this as a basis for evaluating their performance of TM tasks (Nehles *et al.*, 2006). Additionally, this can be achieved by eliciting the LMs' motivation for the TM work by explaining to them how performing the TM work will facilitate their attainment of managerial roles (Kuvaas *et al.*, (2014). The implication of this recommendation is that human resources staff expertise should incorporate the TM tasks into the LMs' performance contract. Additionally, awareness sessions must be conducted by the human resource department for all LMs about the new development. Carrying out such sessions requires certain amount of financial resources.

Fourth, the CSO may consider having ongoing leadership development programmes within the proposed TM scheme to equip LMs with TM skills and knowledge after going through a one-time LDP. To achieve this, it is suggested to integrate the formal one-time LDP with on-the-job training, such as coaching and providing acting (deputising) opportunities, wherein the LMs can represent the Directors in their absence. The suggestion stems from the findings of the study, which revealed that some participants rated the LDP insufficient in equipping LMs to handle TM tasks effectively due to its one-time nature. Their assessment was based on the understanding that leadership competencies require continuous development, considering the dynamic environment in which LMs operate (see



Chapter 6, section 6.3). Therefore, to address this concern, it is suggested to offer ongoing leadership development opportunities that would enhance LMs' TM knowledge and skills, which in turn facilitate their involvement in TM.

Fifth, the CSO through the human resource department may consider enforcing the talent development budget policy for LMs, to ensure that the limited talent development budget is appropriately utilised to address the training needs of employees in their respective departments. This proposal is drawn from the observation that LMs have been deviating from the established budgetary policies for talent development. Initially, the policy required LMs to prioritise training for employees who had not participated in any training during the previous year due to the constraints of the limited budget. However, as it became evident that the budget was inadequate to meet even the crucial staff training requirements, LMs began to diverge from the policy by giving priority to individuals who had not travelled in the previous year, rather than basing decisions on the results of TNA. Human resource department's failure to monitor and ensure LMs' adherence to the policy allowed this behaviour to go unchecked (refer to Chapter 6, section 6.3). As a solution, it is suggested that strict enforcement of compliance with talent development budget implementation can effectively address the problem of LMs deviating from the prescribed norms. This measure will help ensure that the training budget is allocated appropriately to cater to the genuine needs of employees in the CSO. The recommendation implies that human resource department staff must devote some of their time to enforcing the policy.

Sixth managerial implication suggests the need to involve LMs in the process of candidate shortlisting in the talent acquisition and identification practice. Currently, LMs are not part of the shortlisting process, and human resource department conducts it independently. As a result, bottlenecks arise, and there are instances where human resource department shortlists unsuitable candidates because they fail to understand the alternative qualifications needed for the position (See Chapter 6, section 6.2). Consequently, involving LMs in the process is believed to be beneficial in addressing these issues and ultimately ensuring the shortlisting of suitable candidates.

The final implication underscores the significance of profiling external factors such as politics, manifested in low leadership independence, and the COVID-19 pandemic among other things, as causes of the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. By conducting a thorough analysis of these profiled external

forces, policymakers can be better equipped to anticipate the potential threats and opportunities they pose. This understanding can guide them in effectively aligning the TM programme with these external forces, enabling them to mitigate threats while making the most of the available opportunities. Concerning internal forces, there is a need for the CSO to relax its bureaucratic ideologies and structure, in order to accommodate innovative ideas and allow for quick response to problems. The study's implications are drawn from the observation that the interplay of external factors (e.g. politics manifested in low leadership independence; the COVID-19 pandemic) and internal factors (e.g. disposition of TM stakeholders; resource constraints; CSO bureaucracy) created an inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM (see Chapter 7).

## **8.7 Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research**

The study adopted a single case research strategy, focusing on the CSO, which means that the results are only applicable to the CSO and cannot be generalised. To address this limitation, a similar study involving commercial banks in Malawi is suggested, to compare and contrast the findings. Moreover, the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic before vaccination, limiting the insights into the impact of the pandemic on TM implementation through the lens of LMs to the pre-vaccination period. Therefore, there is a need for another study to investigate the impact of the pandemic on LMs' involvement in TM after vaccination. Additionally, the study provided valuable insights into LMs' involvement in TM at prescribed and actual levels. The coalesced framework provided the medium for analysing LMs' involvement in TM in CSO at both levels. Yet, the involvement of LMs in TM includes the living experience of employees of the implementation of TM through lenses of the LM dimension. This dimension was not examined in the study. Consequently, the insight unearthed is insufficient to provide full guidance on the appropriate prescribed level of involvement of LMs in TM in the CSO. Accordingly, future research is required to explore this aspect of LMs' involvement in TM in the banking sector. Finally, future research is required to test the generated coalesced framework for analysing prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM in commercial banks.

Concerning the uncertainty avoidance dimension, Malawi does not have a clear preference for uncertainty avoidance, as its score was 50 on the Hofstede culture scale. Yet the study results showed that the CSO follows a hybrid TM philosophy consisting of an inclusive and an exclusive TM philosophy. Previous studies suggest that weak uncertainty

avoidance cultures are more associated with an exclusive TM approach, while strong uncertainty avoidance cultures are more associated with an inclusive TM approach (Hofstede 2011:10; Agarwal 2016:7). However, the results of the present study suggest that a culture whose uncertainty avoidance is ambiguous favours a hybrid TM philosophy that includes an inclusive self-initiated talent development TM philosophy and an exclusive key position TM philosophy. Therefore, a study is required to examine the relationship between ambiguous uncertainty avoidance culture and the hybrid TM philosophy.

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## Appendices

### Appendix IA: Interview guide

#### Demographic Questions

- What is your current position?
  - (a) Officer, (b) Supervisor, (c) Manager, (d) Director (e) Executive Management
- How long have you been in the position?
  - (a) 1-5 years, (b) 6-10 years, (c) 11-15 years, (d) 16-20 years, (e) 20-25 years (f) 26-30 years, (g) 31-35years, (h) 36-40 years, (h) 40-45years, (j) 46-50years
- How long have you been working in the Bank?
  - (a) 1-5 years, (b)6-10 years, (c) 11-15 years, (d) 16-20 years, (e) 20-25 years, (f) 26-30 years,(g) 31-35years, (h) 36-40 years, (h) 40-45years, (i) 46-50 years (j) Over 50 years
- Please provide the name of your department?
- Please provide the name of your functional area?
- What are your highest qualifications?
- What is your gender?

#### Main Question(s)

##### *Definition of talent*

- In your understanding how is talent defined in the CSO? And why?
  - (a) Does the CSO's definition of talent apply to all employees or a selected few?
  - (b) If selected few, how are those considered talented treated as compared to those not considered as talented.
- In your opinion do you envisage any change in talent definition in the future? If yes, Why?

- Do you think the current COVID-19 pandemic has in any way affected the way talent is defined in the CSO? If yes, explain why and how?
- Does the status of the CSO (Government major shareholder, operating within Act of Parliament provisions, non-profit oriented, mandated to ensure price and financial stability in the country and one of the least independent in SADC region bloc in any way affect the way talent is defined? (e.g. talent attraction and spotting, talent development, talent retention).

***Talent management programme/scheme***

- How do the CSO's LMs use TM/HRM practices to manage talent in the Bank?

***Talent acquisition/recruitment***

- How does the CSO recruit talent?
- To what extent are LMs involved in talent recruitment?
- How does the Bank promote people/identify people?
- To what extent are LMs involved in staff promotion/identification?
- Why are LMs involved to that extent in the promotion?
- In your opinion do you think the current COVID-19 pandemic has in any way influenced the way talent is attracted and spotted in the CSO? If yes, explain why and how?

***Talent development/training***

- How does the CSO develop its talent?
- To what extent are LMs involved in talent development?
- In your opinion why do you think LMs are involved in talent development to that extent?
- In your opinion do you think the current COVID-19 pandemic has in any way affected the way talent is developed in your division? If yes, explain why and how?

### ***Performance Management***

- Explain how the Bank manages staff performance?
- To what extent are LMs involved in performance management?
- In your opinion why do you think LMs are involved in performance management to that extent?
- Do you think the current COVID-19 pandemic has in any way affected the way staff performance was managed in your division? If yes, explain why and how?

### ***TM expertise***

- Based on your experience, does the CSO have a training programme for LMs intended to equip their TM expertise?
- If yes, in your opinion do you think the training is adequate or not and why?
- Do you think the current COVID-19 pandemic has in any way affected the way LMs were trained in TM expertise? If yes, explain why and how?

### ***TM budgets***

- How is the TM budget formulated, approved, and implemented in the Bank?
- To what extent are LMs involved in the TM budget process?
- Why are they involved to that extent?
- In your opinion do you think LMs have decision power over the Division's talent development budget?
- Do you think the current COVID-19 pandemic has in any way affected the way TM budget was formulated, approved, and implemented in the CSO, if yes how? And why?

### ***LMs involvement flexibility***

- Based on the extent of LMs' involvement in TM, is there any possibility that the current situation might change in the future? If yes how and why?

### ***Core and TM responsibilities***

- How do LMs balance core and TM responsibilities?

- Why do LMs align the execution of TM responsibilities and general management responsibilities that way?

***Contextual factors affecting the implementation of talent in the CSO.***

- Does the status of the CSO (Government major shareholder, operating in line with Act of Parliament provisions, non-profit oriented, mandated to ensure price and financial stability in the country and one of least independent in SADC bloc in any way affect the way LMs are involved in TM practices? (e.g.talent attraction and spotting, talent development, performance management, TM expertise acquisition, and TM budget)
- In your opinion, what are the main forces/pressures that affect your involvement in TM? And how do they affect your involvement in TM practices?

***Barriers and enablers of LMs' involvement in TM***

- In your opinion, what factors/reasons restrain and facilitate LMs' involvement in TM in the CSO? How and why?

***Closing questions***

- Do you have anything else you would like to share in line with your experience on TM in the Bank?
- Would you recommend document(s) that you are aware of which might be of help to the study?



## **BACK-UP QUESTIONS**

### ***Talent definition***

- In your opinion, why is talent defined/perceived that way in the CSO?
- What are the reasons behind defining talent that way in the CSO?
- What factors influence the need for those qualities in talent?

### ***Talent Management***

- Who is responsible for managing talent in the CSO? (e.g position, office, department, functional area, committee)?
- In your opinion, what are the reasons behind having HRM/TM practices in the CSO?
- How are TM decisions made in your division/department?
- Does the process apply to all divisions/departments in the CSO? Why?

### ***Talent acquisition and identification***

- Explain the process involved in talent acquisition and process?
- In your understanding, do you think all talents in the CSO were spotted and recruited using the same process? And how If not, what process did the CSO use and why?
- Who is responsible for spotting talent in the CSO Organisation?
- Does the process used in your division/department apply across the CSO?
- In your understanding, who do you think was involved in spotting and recruiting your talent in the CSO? Why? Do you think the setup applies across the CSO? Why?
- What specific activities do LMs do in talent attraction and promotion/identification?

### ***Talent development***

- Explain the process involved in talent development in the CSO?
- Explain the process involved in developing talent in your division/department? Is the process applicable across the Case Study Organisation? Why?
- Who is responsible for talent development in your division/department? Why? Is the setup the same across the CSO? Why?

- What approaches/methods are used in your division/department to develop talent? (e.g. on the job, off the job, job rotation), and why? Are the approaches for developing talent applicable across the CSO? why?
- In your understanding, can you explain the reason(s) behind the way you are involved in the identified TM practice?
- What specifically is your involvement in the mentioned TM practice(s)/?
- What specific activities do LMs do in the talent development process?

### ***Performance Management***

- What specific activities do LMs do in performance management?

### ***TM budgets***

- What specific activities do LMs do in TM budget process?

### ***Contextual Factors***

- Based on your experience in the CSO, what forces/pressures (e.g. internal or external) facilitate the implementation of TM policies/practices in the CSO? How and why?
- In your opinion, what forces/pressures (e.g., internal or external) restrain the implementation of TM policies/practices in the CSO? How and why?
- Does the status of the CSO (e.g. Government major shareholder, operating within Act of Parliament provisions, non-profit oriented, mandated to ensure price and financial stability in the country and least independent in the SADC region) in any way affect the way TM is implemented? (e.g. talent attraction and spotting, talent development, talent retention).
- 

### ***Barriers and Enablers***

- In your opinion, what factors/reasons restrain LMs' involvement in TM in the CSO? How and Why?
- In your opinion what factors/reasons facilitate LMs' involvement in TM in the CSO? How? And why?

## **Appendix IB: Participants Information Sheet and Consent Form**

**Title of the research:** *Line Managers' (LMs) involvement in Talent Management (TM) in CSO*

**Name of the department:** *Human Resource Management*

### **Introduction**

You are kindly invited to participate in this research about LMs' involvement in TM in a CSO. Before you decide to participate in the exercise it is imperative for you to fully understand the rationale behind conducting this research and what it will involve. In this regard, please take time to read the information provided below and feel free to discuss with others if you wish.

### **Who will conduct the research?**

The research is being conducted by Charming Nakweya as part of the Doctor of Philosophy in Business Thesis at Nottingham Trent University, England, United Kingdom.

### **What is the aim of this research?**

The study aims to examine LMs' involvement in TM in a CSO. To meet the objectives of the study (e.g. examine how talent is understood and managed through the lenses of the TM philosophy, examine the way in which LMs' are involved in TM, and identify barriers and enablers for LMs' involvement in TM), the study aims to answer the following three research questions; (1) How is talent understood and managed through the lenses of TM philosophy? (2) how are LMs involved in TM (3) which factors precluded and facilitated the involvement of LMs in TM? The novelty of this study is underpinned by two factors. First, there is paucity of research within the discipline of TM on LMs' involvement in TM, and the study intends to fill the gap. Second, the study is conducted in a unique context (Malawian banking context). Concerning the former, the study results will help HRM policy makers formulate TM strategies that are appropriate for the CSO context and will provide guidance on how best to involve LMs in attracting, developing, retaining and streamlining talent shortage issues. Consequently, this would lead to the creation of a sustainable competitive advantage as the CSO will be able to attract right quality talent, in the right quantity, at the right cost, at the right time and deploy them in the right places

ready to help the achievement of the CSO's mandate. Regarding the latter, the study results will advance our insight of TM.

### **Do you have to take part?**

The information sheet has been prepared to help you decide if you would like to participate in the study. You have the choice to decide whether or not to participate in the study. If you decide to participate you will be free to withdraw from the interviews anytime without providing reasons. The information collected up to the point of withdraw will be destroyed. However, you will not be allowed to withdraw your data from the study after the elapse of two weeks from the date of the interviews. Should you choose to participate, you may choose not to answer any question without providing a reason.

### **Why have you been chosen?**

You have been selected to take part in this study as a member of senior management and you have direct involvement in the researched area. In this regard, we believe that your participation is very crucial for the successful completion of this research.

### **What would you be asked to do if you took part?**

Your involvement in the study entails being interviewed by the researcher using face-face interviews while observing 2 meters social distance. **However, should the Corona virus pandemic situation in Malawi worsen at the time of data collection, the interviews will be conducted online using either Microsoft teams or Skype.** We anticipate the interviews session to take approximately 45 minutes to 90 minutes (1.5hrs). You will be asked questions on talent management, LMs' involvement in TM and barriers and facilitators of LMs' involvement in TM. The interviews will be audio recorded.

### **What happens to the data collected?**

The interviews recordings will be transcribed and analyzed to come up with a PhD thesis as part of the PhD study. Thus, data collected will be used **for academic purposes only**. To maintain confidentiality, from point of data collection onwards all data will be **anonymised** using codes that will only allow the researcher to identify each participant. In addition, analysis and reporting will be done using this anonymized unique code. Furthermore, all transcribed data will be kept from personal identifiers. Additionally, all data will be treated with **ultimate confidentiality** by adhering to confidentiality protocols

provided by the University. Also, only the researcher and supervision team will be allowed to access the data. Too, all anonymised electronic data will be stored in a pass-word protected laptop and password protected external hard drive. All hard copies relating to the study will be kept in locked cabinets. All information will be kept for a period of 10 years after which they will be destroyed by shredding, deletion or other appropriate means.

### **What happens if you do not want to take part or if you change your mind?**

You are free to decide whether or not to participate in the study. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you will be free to withdraw from the interviews and your data from the study before the elapse of two weeks from the date of interviews. **After two weeks from the date of the interview** you will not be allowed to withdraw your data. **In the event of online interviews, an online equivalent information sheet alongside consent form shall be emailed to you and you will be requested to sign the consent form confirming that you have read and understood your rights in the study and consent to participate in online interviews. Similarly, the withdraw protocols applicable in one-on-one interviews will apply to the online interviews. In order to make this workable, prior to interviews, the researcher shall ensure that you are familiar with the selected online facility particularly on how to use the start/join and withdraw/stop buttons as this will enable you to exercise all your rights related to participating in this study. Thus, your full understanding and comfortability on the use of the start/join button, withdraw/stop/exit button for the selected online facility will be prerequisite for conducting the online interviews.**

### **Will you be paid for participating in the research?**

Participation in the study is voluntary as such there won't be payment or compensation for your time.

### **Where will the research be conducted?**

Where possible the interview will take place within the CSO premises – your office. Where this is not possible, we request that you advise your preferred venue, which should have minimal distractions. In addition, you will be requested to advise the appropriate time for conducting the interviews.

### **Will the outcomes of the research be published?**

Findings of the study will form part of the PhD thesis. Dissemination will be by conference/seminar presentations. In each case, any direct quotes reported from the interview will be disidentified.

### **Further information**

If you have any question, or need for clarification or need more information regarding the study, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher using the contact details provided below. If you do not have any further questions related to the study and would like to participate, please complete the Consent Form (hard copy) or the online copy.

### **Researcher Contact details**

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**CONSENT FORM (SENIOR MANAGEMENT)**

**Title of the research:** *Line Managers’ (LMs) involvement in Talent Management (TM) in a CSO*

**Name of the department:** *Human Resource Management*

Please note that signing this form does not bind you to anything as you are free to withdraw even after signing. Thus, the purpose of this form is to confirm that you are willing to participate in this study and to let you understand what it entails. Please tick or initial in the appropriate box.

No	Item	Yes	No
1	I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet on the above project and had the opportunity to consider the information and the researcher answered all queries satisfactorily.		
2	I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that am free to withdraw from the interviews and my data up to two weeks after the interviews.		
3	I consent that after two weeks from the date of the interviews I will not withdraw my data from the study.		
4	I consent to being audio and video recorded as part of the project		
5	I understand that I can withdraw my data from the study at any time		
6	I understand that any information recorded in the investigation will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available		
7	I consent to being a participant in the project		
8	I certify that am above 18 years of age		
9	I consent that I can be interviewed through face-face interviews or online using either Microsoft teams or Skype.		

.....

**Name of participant**

.....

**Signature**

.....

**Date**

## Appendix IC: NVIVO screenshot used to aid data analysis

The screenshot displays the NVivo 12 Pro interface with a project titled "LMs' involvement in TM in a Malawian Bank III - 21st May 2022.nvp". The main window shows a hierarchical tree of nodes under the "Nodes" tab. The nodes are organized into themes and sub-themes, with columns for file counts, references, and dates.

Name	Files	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Theme 3- Inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM due to contextual factors	47	460	25/05/2021 10:1	CMN	18/05/2022 15:28	CMN
Sub Theme - Internal contextual factors	47	228	03/06/2021 20:5	CMN	18/05/2022 15:34	CMN
Sub Theme - External contextual factors	44	230	18/05/2022 14:0	CMN	19/05/2022 15:53	CMN
Theme 2- LMs initiate TM processes, Propose TM decisions, implement TM and acquire TM Expertise	47	1039	02/06/2021 21:1	CMN	21/05/2022 14:27	CMN
Sub Theme - LMs acquire TM expertise-E	45	120	28/02/2021 17:2	CMN	21/05/2022 13:20	CMN
Sub Theme - Nature of involvement of LMs in TM	24	28	22/10/2021 11:5	CMN	18/05/2022 15:03	CMN
Sub Theme - Alignment of core and TM tasks	40	101	03/06/2021 19:3	CMN	21/05/2022 13:02	CMN
Sub Theme - Hybrid talent development	46	301	18/05/2022 14:3	CMN	20/05/2022 13:55	CMN
Sub Theme - Talent Acquisition and Identification	47	325	18/05/2022 14:3	CMN	20/05/2022 12:24	CMN
Sub Theme - Performance management	47	137	18/05/2022 14:5	CMN	19/05/2022 18:34	CMN
Sub Theme - TM budget	15	18	18/05/2022 14:5	CMN	20/05/2022 16:40	CMN
Sub Theme - Merit payment	8	9	18/05/2022 14:5	CMN	19/05/2022 16:45	CMN
Theme 1- Management of talents using hybrid TM philosophy	47	461	18/05/2022 14:0	CMN	21/05/2022 18:51	CMN
Sub Theme - Varied talent definition	46	236	02/06/2021 19:0	CMN	18/05/2022 15:08	CMN
Talent as attributes people possessed	44	182	02/06/2021 18:5	CMN	02/06/2021 18:56	CMN
Talent as Unique people	16	25	02/06/2021 18:5	CMN	02/06/2021 18:57	CMN
Contextual determinants of talent definition	26	29	25/10/2021 13:1	CMN	21/05/2022 14:31	CMN
Sub Theme - Hybrid approach to managing talent	41	172	02/06/2021 19:1	CMN	21/05/2022 17:17	CMN
Sub Theme - Talent definition adaptability	43	53	02/06/2021 19:0	CMN	18/05/2022 15:07	CMN
Flexible talent definition-D	37	45	28/02/2021 11:3	CMN	21/05/2022 14:24	CMN
Inflexible talent definition	8	8	28/02/2021 11:4	CMN	21/05/2022 14:23	CMN

The interface also shows a left-hand navigation pane with categories like Quick Access, Data, Codes, Cases, Notes, Search, Maps, and Output. The bottom status bar indicates the user is CMN and there are 155 items in the project. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the date as 11/06/2022 and the time as 19:23.



## Appendix ID: Reflexive Thematic Analysis Process I

CODES (108)	INITIAL THEMES (33)	CANDIDATE THEMES (12)	DEVELOPED THEMES (6)
<p>1. Talent as highly quality relevant qualification</p> <p>2. Talent as basic required knowledge</p> <p>3. Talent as tech-savvy skill</p> <p>4. Impact of COVID-19 on talent definition-tech-savvy</p> <p>5. Talent as innovative strength</p> <p>6. Talent as entire workforce</p> <p>7. Talent as experience</p> <p>8. Experience one of the determinants for talent identification</p> <p>9. Experience one of the determinants for talent development</p> <p>10. Talent as adaptability</p> <p>11. Talent as ability to transfer knowledge to work</p> <p>12. Talent as natural gift skill</p> <p>13. Talent as discretionary behaviour</p>	<p>1A. Talent as attributes people possessed (1-13)</p>	<p>1B. Varied talent definitions (1A:2A:3A:4A)</p>	<p><b>Theme A: Hybrid approach to managing talent characterised by varied definitions using TM practices (1B:2B)</b></p>
<p>14. Talent as high performers</p> <p>15. Talent as people with potential</p>	<p>2A. Talent as elite staff (14-15)</p>		
<p>16. Flexible talent définition</p> <p>17. Inflexible talent définitions</p>	<p>3A. Flexibility of talent definition (16-17)</p>		
<p>18. Case study Organisation mandate</p> <p>19. Government forces</p>	<p>4A. Impact of context on talent definition (18-19)</p>		
<p>20. Differentiated Performance Management System</p> <p>21. Leadership Development Programme</p> <p>22. Differentiated talent attraction and retention initiatives</p> <p>23. Prioritisation of long-term training to strategic positions</p>	<p>5A. Operationalisation of exclusive key position TM philosophy(20-23)</p>	<p>2B. Hybrid TM philosophy (5A:6A:7A:8A)</p>	
<p>24. Enhanced continuance commitment on staff in key positions</p> <p>25. Frustrated staff in non-key positions</p>	<p>6A. Mixed impacts of key position TM philosophy on all staff (24-25)</p>		

CODES (108)	INITIAL THEMES (33)	CANDIDATE THEMES (12)	DEVELOPED THEMES (6)
26. Justifications for strategic position TM philosophy 27. Justifications against strategic position TM philosophy	7A. Mixed reactions on the rationale for key position TM philosophy (26-27)		
28. Inclusive self-initiated talent development for all 29. Inclusive self-initiated talent development motivated staff	8A. Inclusive approach to managing talent (28-29)		
30. LMs Identify vacancy 31. LMs draw job description 32. LMs formulate interview questions 33. LMs exclusion from shortlisting 34. Bureaucracy and exclusion from shortlisting	9A. LMs initiate talent acquisition and identification (30-34)	3B LMs initiate TM practices (9A:10A:11A)	
35. LMs undertook talent development needs analysis 36. LMs endorsed applications for self-initiated programme 37. LMs drew performance contracts	10A. LMs initiate talent development process (35-36) 11A. LMs initiate performance management (37)		Theme B: LMs initiate, propose, implement TM decisions and acquire TM expertise (3B:4B:5B:6B)
38. LMs participated in talent selection interviews 39. LMs propose names for promotion 40. Criteria promotion-experience, qualification, performance 41. Lack of transparency in promotion 42. Lack of LMs authority to handle grievances 43. Grievance handled by HRD.	12A. LMs propose decision for talent acquisition and identification (38-43)		
44. LMs nominate employees for talent development 45. LMs deviation from short-term training nomination rules 46. Justifications for deviating nominating rules. 47. Criteria for long-term training nominations-Position, TNA and years of service 48. Criticisms for long-term nomination criteria 49. Justifications for long-term nomination criteria	13A. LMs propose talent development decision (44-49)	4B LMs propose TM decisions (12A:13A:14A:15A)	

CODES (108)	INITIAL THEMES (33)	CANDIDATE THEMES (12)	DEVELOPED THEMES (6)
<p>50. LMs appraise employees</p> <p>51. Performance ratings disagreements</p> <p>52. Disagreements resolved at LMs level -dialogue</p> <p>53. Disagreements resolved through withdraw</p> <p>54. Disagreements resolved at director level-dialogue</p> <p>55. Motivations behind escalating grievance above</p> <p>56. HRPP, promotions, merit pay.</p>	<p>14A. LMs propose performance management decisions (50-56)</p>		
<p>57. LMs proposed talent development budget</p> <p>58. LMs monitored talent development budget</p> <p>59. LMs ensured approved employees attended training</p> <p>60. LMs ensured staff shared knowledge to colleagues</p> <p>61. LMs facilitated in-house training programme</p> <p>62. LMs coached and mentored staff</p> <p>63. LMs supported employees on self-initiated programme</p>	<p>15A. LMs propose talent development budget (58)</p> <p>16A. LMs implemented talent development decisions (58-63)</p>	<p>5B LMs implement TM decisions (16A)</p>	
<p>64. LMs attended leadership development programme</p> <p>65. Effect of change of LDP consultants on LMs</p> <p>66. Insufficient LMs TM training</p> <p>67. Sufficient LMs TM training.</p>	<p>17A. LMs attended leadership development programme (64)</p> <p>18A. Mixed reviews of Leadership development programme (65-67)</p>	<p>6B LMs acquire TM expertise (17A:18A)</p>	
<p>68. Enhance effectiveness on talent development process</p> <p>69. LMs enhance effectiveness of talent acquisition and Identification</p> <p>70. LMs ensure fairness and objectivity in talent identification process</p>	<p>19A. Rationale for the extent of involvement of LMs in talent development (68)</p> <p>20A. Rationale for the extent of involvement of LMs in talent acquisition and identification process (69-70)</p>	<p>7B Rationale for the extent of involvement of LMs in TM (19A:20A;21A)</p>	<p><b>Theme C: Rationale for the extent of LMs involvement in TM (7B)</b></p>

CODES (108)	INITIAL THEMES (33)	CANDIDATE THEMES (12)	DEVELOPED THEMES (6)
71. Enhance effectiveness of the PMS process 72. Provide checks and balances on LMs	21A. Rationale for the extent of LMs involvement in performance Management (71-72)		
73. Flexible LMs' involvement in TM 74. Inflexible LMs involvement in TM	22A. Nature of involvement of LMs in TM (73-74)	8B Nature of involvement of LMs in TM (22A)	<b>Theme D: General Management strategies align core and TM strategies (8B:9B)</b>
75. LMs prioritised core over TM tasks 76. LMs lack TM knowledge results in focusing on core tasks 77. LMs were assessed on core tasks 78. Lack of strict submission deadline for TM assignment 79. Shortage of human resource 80. LMs prioritised TM over core tasks 81 LMs prioritise TM to respect HRD submission deadline 82. LMs prioritisation of TM eases workload	23A. LMs use prioritisation to align core over TM tasks (75-82)	9B. Aligning core and TM tasks (23A:24A:25A)	
83. LMs align TM and Core tasks using delegation	24A. LMs align TM and Core tasks using delegation (83)		
84. LMs align TM and Core tasks using time Management.	25A. LMs align TM and Core tasks using time management (84)		
85. lack of TM ownership by LMs -TM is HRD work 86. LMs lack of TM knowledge 87. Weak linkage between TM tasks and performance contract 88. Office politics (gossip) 89. Unilateral TM decision making by HODs	26A. Disposition of TM stakeholders (85-89)	10B Barriers (26A:27A:28A)	
90. Financial constraints 91. Shortage of staff and workloads 92. Conservatism and strict adherence to rules 93. Unilateral decisions on staff movements by authorities 94. LMs' Lack of empowerment. to make decisions	27A. Resource constraints (90-92) 28A. Case Study Organisation Bureaucracy (92-94)		<b>Theme E: barriers and facilitators of LMs' involvement in TM (10B:11B)</b>
95. Availability of TM budget 96. Availability of performance management system 97. Availability of LMs TM training	29A. Internal TM stakeholders support(95-97)	11B Facilitators (29A:30A)	

CODES (108)	INITIAL THEMES (33)	CANDIDATE THEMES (12)	DEVELOPED THEMES (6)
98. Government and International Partners' Capacity building Support - Government, IMF, World Bank	30A. External TM stakeholders support (98)		
99. Politics-rationale for low leadership independence	31A. Politics-low leadership independence (99-103)		
100. compromised acquisition of TM expertise by LMs			
101. Compromised involvement of LMs in talent development			
102. Compromised involvement of LMs in performance management		2B LMs compromised and cautious	
103. Compromised involvement of LMs in promotion			
104. LMs failure to participate in performance management due to COVID-19	32A. COVID-19 (104-107)	involvement in TM due to contextual factors (31A:32A:33A)	<b>Theme F: LMs cautious and compromised involvement in TM due to contextual factors (12B)</b>
105. LMs failure to participate in talent development due to COVID-19			
106. LMs failure to participate in talent acquisition and identification due to COVID-19			
107. LMs failure to acquire TM expertise due to COVID-19.			
108. LMs rationalization of TM roles in line with employment legal instruments	33A. Legal instruments (108)		

## Appendix IF: Changes made on Appendix ID and reflected in Figure 9

Some of the codes in Appendix ID were renamed after further review (Maguire and Delahunt 2017:3358; Braun *et al.*, 2019:856; Braun and Clarke 2006:92). For example, Code No. 40, Criteria promotion-experience, qualification, and performance in Appendix ID was renamed Code No. 40. Promotion criteria-talent identification in Figure 9. Similarly, Code No.42 Lack of LMs' authority to handle grievances in Appendix ID was renamed Code No. 42. LMs lack of authority to handle grievances in Figure 9. Likewise, Code No.43. Grievance handled by HRD in Appendix ID was renamed Code No.43 promotion grievances handled by HRD in Figure 9. Equally, Code No.52 disagreements resolved at LMs level-the dialogue in Appendix ID was renamed Code No. 52 performance disagreements resolved at LMs level-dialogue in Figure 9. Code No.53 disagreements resolved through withdrawal in Appendix ID was renamed Code No. 53 performance disagreements resolved through LMs withdrawal in Figure 9. Finally, Code No.54 disagreements resolved at Director level-dialogue in Appendix ID was renamed Code No. 54 performance disagreements resolved at Director level-dialogue in Figure 9. The codes from Appendix ID that were renamed in Figure 9 are provided in table below.

### Codes from Appendix ID renamed in Figure 9.

No	Name of the code in Appendix ID	Changed code name in Figure 9
1	Code No.40, Criteria promotion-experience, qualification, and performance	Code No.40. promotion criteria-talent identification
2	Code No.42 Lack of LMs' authority to handle grievances	Code No. 42. LMs lack of authority to handle grievances
3	Code No.43. Grievance handled by HRD	Code No. 43 Promotion grievances handled by HRD
4	Code No.52 disagreements resolved at LMs level - dialogue.	Code No. 52. Performance disagreements resolved at LMs level-dialogue
5	Code No.53 Disagreements resolved through withdrawal	Code No. 53. performance disagreements resolved through LMs withdrawal
6	Code No.54 disagreements resolved at Director level-dialogue	Code No. 54 performance disagreements resolved at Director level-dialogue.

## Appendix IG: Changes made in Figure 9 and reflected in Figure 10

After starting the exercise of writing the findings in line with the structure provided in Figure 9, it was observed that there were overlaps of themes among other things that required further analysis.

First, it was observed that theme B, LMs initiate, propose, implement TM decisions and acquire TM expertise had an overlap of TM practices within the candidate themes, which affected the structure and presentation of the results. For example, candidate theme B1, LMs initiate TM process, comprised of initial themes and corresponding codes related to talent acquisition and identification (e.g. B.1.1; codes number 30-34) overlapped with candidate theme B2, LMs propose TM decisions, comprised of initial themes and corresponding codes related to talent acquisition and identification (e.g. B.2.1: codes number 38-43). Similarly, candidate theme B1, LMs initiate TM process comprising of initial theme and corresponding codes related to talent development practice (e.g. B.1.2; codes number 35-36) overlapped with candidate theme B2 LMs propose TM decisions comprised of initial theme and corresponding codes related to talent development practice (e.g. B.2.2; codes number 44- 49). These overlaps included, but are not limited to, other TM practices such as performance management.

Therefore, theme B and its corresponding initial themes and codes were reordered by clustering together all initial themes and corresponding codes related to a particular TM practice and using the TM practice as the initial theme as provided in figure 10. For example, initial themes and corresponding codes related to talent acquisition and identification (e.g. B.1.1; Code No 30- 34) under candidate theme B1, and initial themes and corresponding codes related to talent acquisition and identification (e.g. B.2.1: Codes No.38-43) under candidate theme B2, were clustered together under candidate theme B1, talent acquisition and identification in Figure 10 as demonstrated in table below reordering overlaps within the theme B. This was because they all related to the talent acquisition and identification process. Thus, the exercise of reordering the initial themes and corresponding codes was carried out for all TM practices namely, talent acquisition and identification, hybrid talent development, performance management and TM budget within theme B.

**Reordering overlaps within the theme B**

FIGURE 9		FIGURE 10
<i>Candidate Themes that overlap as they belong to the same TM practice - Talent acquisition and identification</i>		<i>Overlapping candidate themes reordered under the relevant TM practice</i>
<i>Candidate theme</i>	<i>Candidate theme</i>	<i>Candidate Theme</i>
<b>B.1.1. LMs initiate talent acquisition and identification</b>	<b>B.2.1 LMs propose decision for talent acquisition and identification process</b>	<b>B1 Talent acquisition and identification</b>
<b>Codes</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>B.1.1. LMs initiate talent acquisition and identification</b>
30. Identify vacancy	38. LMs participated in talent selection interviews	30. LMs Identify vacancy
31. Drew job description	39 LMs propose names for promotion.	31. LMs draw job description
32. Formulate interview questions	40 Promotion criteria-talent identification	32. LMs formulate interview questions
33. LMs excluded from shortlisting	41. Lack of transparency in promotion	33. LMs exclusion from shortlisting
34. Bureaucracy and exclusion from shortlisting	42. LMs lack of authority to handle grievances	34. Bureaucracy and exclusion from shortlisting
	43. Promotion grievances resolved by HRD.	<b>B.1.2 LMs propose decision for talent acquisition and identification</b>
		38. LMs participated in talent selection interviews
		39. LMs propose names for promotion
		40. Promotion criteria-talent identification
		41. Lack of transparency in promotion
		42. LMs lack of authority to handle grievances
		43. Promotion grievances resolved by HRD.

In addition to overlaps within theme B in Figure 9, other overlaps between themes were also observed in Figure 9. For example, theme C (LMs cautious and compromised involvement in TM due to contextual factors) and theme D (barriers and facilitators of LMs' involvement in TM) in Figure 9 had one thing in common, as they all contributed to the inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM. Therefore, the themes were merged and renamed as theme C inconsistency between prescribed and actual involvement of LMs in TM due to contextual factors in Figure 10. Similarly, theme E (Rationale for the extent of LMs involvement in TM) and theme F (General Management strategies align core and TM strategies) had one common thing, they all related to what LMs did in TM which was also related to Theme B (LMs initiate, propose, implement TM decisions and acquire TM expertise) in Figure 9. In addition, themes E and F were not comprehensive enough to qualify for a complete theme. Therefore, Theme E was incorporated into relevant TM practices candidate themes in Figure 10. Furthermore,



Theme F in Figure 9 was incorporated into Theme B as candidate themes B5 and B6 in theme B in Figure 10. Finally, theme A, Hybrid approach to managing talent characterised by varied definitions using TM practices in Figure 9 was rephrased to read theme A: Managing talents using hybrid TM philosophy in Figure 10.

## Appendix IH: Ethics Approval document.

APPROVED: NAKWEYA 2020/154 request for ethical review



**Cali, Annabel**

To: Nakweya, Charming Maxwell 2019 (PGR)

Cc: Pass, Sarah; Mitsakis, Fotis; Caven, Valerie



Tue 7/28/2020 8:27 AM

Message sent on behalf of the Chair of the College Research Ethics Committee

Dear Charming

Thank you for the recent submission of your application (No.2020/154) to the College Research Ethics Committee (CREC) on 30 May 2020 requesting ethical clearance for the project entitled: *LINE MANAGERS' INVOLVEMENT IN TALENT MANAGEMENT THE CASE OF A MALAWIAN BANK*.

We are pleased to inform you that the reviewers were happy to confirm that in their judgement there were no outstanding ethical concerns that required further discussion or exploration prior to data collection and they are satisfied that your application meets with their ethical approval.

We would like to wish you well in the completion of your project.

Sent on behalf of  
Chair CREC

**Annabel Cali**

Research and REF Administrator

Research Operations

Nottingham Trent University

Arkwright Room B113

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## Appendix IIA: Managements of talents using hybrid TM philosophy

**Table 5.1 Empirical evidence for varied perspectives on talent definition**

No	Talent definition	Sample of empirical evidence/Participants Response (s)
1	Talent as a natural-gift skill	<p><i>"I took it as a natural skill, because you would have a skill then talent would be something natural a natural enablement so to me it's something to do with a natural ability"</i> (OF3)</p> <p><i>"talent it is ...something like a skill set which every individual has on his own and ...it is unique to each and every individual, yes".</i>(LM1)</p> <p><i>"talent ... entails their innate or inborn capabilities"</i> (SP4)</p> <p><i>"talent is something that is in-born"</i> (SM1),</p>
2	Talent as basic required knowledge	<p><i>"talent in the bank is defined as skills or knowledge"</i> (LM2)</p> <p><i>"Talent it is a combination of knowledge that an individual has"</i> (HRD3)</p> <p><i>"talent in the bank is defined in terms of skills, knowledge"</i> (OF4)</p>
3	Talent as a tech-savvy skill	<p><i>"Like in this era we say that those people who can use the technology they will be considered as more talented than those who fail to use the technology"</i> (HRD2)</p> <p><i>"Well...if somebody is very good in IT and during the pandemic that talent stands out amongst the others who are weak in that area"</i> (LM4)</p> <p><i>"the Bank decongested the offices and allowed people to start working from home and this required staff to have technological skills for them to be able to work well from home"</i>(OF4).</p> <p><i>"when you are working from home I think you also need to be very conversant with the ICT facilities that we normally use"</i> (SP2)</p> <p><i>"You know with this issue of working from home one needs some skills in ICT so that should be the reason"</i> (SM1)</p> <p><i>"The other issue that has also to be mentioned that even if people were told to be working from home, they needed to have expertise in how to use technology so that they are able to work online"</i> (SP13)</p>
4	Talent as a highly-quality relevant qualification	<p><i>"Talent the way it comes out to me as a natural ingredient in a person, ofcourse in a way nurtured by education qualifications and professional qualifications and again work experience"</i> (SM4)</p> <p><i>"My understanding of talent in the bank is one the acquisition of the ... the qualifications"</i> (HRD2)</p> <p><i>"They were looking at ... employing the right people, ... so they had to look at qualifications, they had to look at the, basically it was the issue of qualifications. (LM1)</i></p> <p><i>"I would define talent as ... qualifications"</i>(SP2).</p>
5	Talent as experience	<p><i>"To me...I look at talent as skills and also experience that someone has"</i> (SP10)</p> <p><i>"the way I understand at talent in relation to the Bank is that it refers to those members of staff who have required ... experience"</i> (HRD2)</p> <p><i>"Talent to me means ... experience that an individual has that he uses or contributes to his or her performance in their respective positions"</i> (LM3)</p> <p><i>"talent is defined as... experience which one has"</i> (OF1).</p> <p><i>"Talent the way it comes out to me as ... work experience.</i>(SM4)</p>
6	Talent as innovativeness	<p><i>"I look at talent as being able to have that chance to be innovative in whatever you do, so the bank expects at a minimum to undertake some services some job functions but talent would be one's ability to do those problems that have a lot of hassles and two to be innovative in doing those services, yes."</i> (SP11)</p> <p><i>"I think that would show that someone is talented is able to do to improve to bring about some efficiency in the way he does the job"</i> (LM21).</p>
7	Talent as the entire workforce	<p><i>"Talent is defined to mean all members of staff each one of them being talent in their own right and therefore each and every member of staff is looked at as talent"</i> (HRD1)</p>

No	Talent definition	Sample of empirical evidence/Participants Response (s)
		<p><i>“everybody has got his own talent and his own way of working” (LM1)</i></p> <p><i>“all employees in the Bank as every person requires skills and knowledge of job for him to be able perform his responsibilities”(OF4)</i></p>
8	Talent as discretionary behaviour	<p><i>“In my understanding I think talent is just those people who have got the basic requisite knowledge, skills, but are also capable of doing more...They can apply themselves to do something more than what is basic within their area... so they can do something extra, so they're the type who are, how can I put it, well capable of doing, going the extra mile in terms of performing their duties” (LM21).</i></p>
9	Talent as adaptability	<p><i>“now people will be looking at not only those who have got may be high potential to perform at higher levels but also those people who can be easily adapt to the new situation” (HRD2)</i></p> <p><i>“talent in the Bank is defined in terms of the skills, capabilities that a person has, and it also includes the person's ability to learn, grow and take up challenging assignments or jobs in the Bank”.(LM8).</i></p> <p><i>“I would say talent comes in different forms... it can be something that you learn”(SP2)</i></p>
10	Talent as the ability to transfer knowledge to work	<p><i>“To me talent is more than just having the knowledge and the skills but it's like application of your other qualities which are unique maybe to you and not present in every other member of staff” (LM21)</i></p> <p><i>“The way I understand at talent in relation to the Bank is that it refers to those members of staff who ... have ability to transfer their knowledge into a consistent outstanding performance in their immediate positions” (HRD2)</i></p> <p><i>“talent needs one that actually is good in his or her profession and then execute the same when you are actually practicing practically” (SP6),</i></p> <p><i>“I take talent as ...that ability to use both skill and the in-born ability to deliver on any activity or any work that one has been given to the best of one's capabilities.” (SM2)</i></p>
11	Talent as high performers	<p><i>“those people who really works hard to add significant value to the bank's operations, the way they work and the way they achieve the bank's objectives. It is all related to those people who performs well and contribute to the objectives of the Bank” (LM18)</i></p> <p><i>“first...I came in as a supervisor then I was promoted to ...a manager aah I think one of the...reasons which were considered at that time were my outstanding performance (HRD3)</i></p> <p><i>“I would define talent as people who are highfliers, who ... perform their job and produce outstanding performance that add value to the Bank (SP5).</i></p> <p><i>“So the term talent would refer to people that I have in the department or the people that are working in the Bank who individually contribute substantially to the department's performance as well as the Bank's mission” (SM3).</i></p>
12	Talent as people with potential	<p><i>“talent refers to certain employees that have certain potential or they are showing certain promise then you kind of nurture that promise or that potential to say this one we can groom them for a certain position or we can develop them in a certain way” (SP3)</i></p> <p><i>“in the context of the Bank, talent really relates to how one is equipped to deliver to the objectives of the organisation both for the current and also how they are equipped to deliver to the objectives for the future at high positions, bearing in mind that aah talent should not just be for now like the current job but also to future jobs as the organisation is growing and changing in scope” (LM12).</i></p> <p><i>“I understand that talent in relation to the Bank is that it refers to those members of staff who have ...got potential to deliver the same outstanding performances in higher level jobs within the area of their profession, something like that” (HRD2)</i></p>

**Key for TM stakeholders, OF3, SP3, SP10, SP11, →Other staff category(Officers, and Supervisors) LM2, LM21, LM18 → Line Managers category; HRD2 → HRD category; SM4 → Senior Management category**

**Table 5.2: Stakeholders' perspectives on talent definition**

No	Twelve varied perspectives on Talent definition	Two perspectives definition	consolidated on talent	Nature of talent definition	Stakeholder Category
1	Talent as a natural-gift skills	Attributes possessed	people	Expected to change	LM→3, OTS→4, SM→3 = (10)
2	Talent as the basic requisite knowledge	Attributes possessed	people	Expected to change	HRD→2, LM→6, OTS→2 = (10)
3	Talent as a tech-savvy skill	Attributes possessed	people	Expected to change	HRD→2, LM→11; OTS→12, SM→3 SRCPC→1 = (29)
4	Talent as high-quality relevant qualifications	Attributes possessed	people	Expected to change	HRD→2, LM→2, OTS→7, SM→1= (12)
5	Talent as experience	Attributes possessed	people	Expected to change	HRD→3, LM→10, OTS→10, SM→1= (24)
6	Talent as innovativeness	Attributes possessed	people	Expected to change	LM→2, OTS→1= (3)
7	Talent as all staff	Attributes possessed	people	Expected to change	HRD→2, LM→2, OS→1 = (5)
8	Talent as discretionary behaviour	Attributes possessed	people	Expected to change	LM→2
9	Talent as ability to adapt	Attributes possessed	people	Expected to change	HRD→1, LM→2, OTS→1 = (4)
10	Talent as ability to transfer knowledge to work	Attributes possessed	people	Expected to change	HRD→2, LM→5, OTS→1, SM→1, SRCPC→1= (10)
11	Talent as people with high performance	Talent as elite staff with high performance and potential		Expected to change	HRD→2, LM→6, OTS→2, SME→2, SRCPC→1= (13)
12	Talent as people with potential	Talent as elite staff with high performance and potential		Expected to change	HRD→2, LM→3, OTS→1, SRCPC→1= (7)

***Key for TM stakeholders: LM → Line Manager; HRD → Human Resource Department Staff; OS → Other Staff (officers and supervisors); SRC → Staff Representative Council; SM → Senior Management (Heads of Department); The numbers in the stakeholders' category column represent a number of participants per stakeholder and total participants.***

**Table 5.3 Summarised findings on talent definition in the CSO**

No	Varied perspectives on talent definition	TM stakeholders					
		LM	HRD	OS	SM	SRC	Docs
1	Talent as attributes people possessed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	<i>Talent as tech-savvy featured high</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	<i>Talent as experience featured high</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
2	Talent as elite staff with outstanding performance and potential	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	Characteristics of talent definition <i>(whether it will change or remain the same in the future)</i>						
	Flexible talent definition	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Inflexible talent definition	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	
4	Impact of context on talent definition <i>(efficiency forces vs public organisation forces)</i>						
	Bank's mandate influenced talent definition	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
	Bank's quasi-government elements such as non-profit making attributes influenced talent definitions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

**Key for TM stakeholders:** LM →Line Manager, HRD →Human Resource Department Staff, OS →Other Staff (officers and Supervisors), SRC→Staff Representative Council, SM →Senior Management, Docs →Bank's documents; **YES** – stakeholder category mentioned the factor; **NO**- No stakeholder mentioned the factor