An exploration of the challenges associated with the recruitment of Talent for an Irish Political Party.

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Abstract

Talent within an organisation consists of those individuals who display the highest levels of potential and assist an organisation in the improvement of the overall performance (CIPD, 2014). The implementation of a talent management model by an organisation is the systematic process of attraction, identification, development, retention and progression.

The primary concern of this dissertation is to explore the challenges associated with the recruitment of talent. The research was carried out in an Irish Political Party. The party which is the focus of this study is currently experiencing challenges in the attraction and recruitment of talent. This dissertation investigated these challenges in relation to the 'War for Talent'.

The researcher carried out a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews. A total of five interviews were conducted. The interviewees consisted of three senior employees of the political party and two independent Human Resource consultants. The findings of the research identified the main elements of attraction and the challenges experienced by the political party in relation to the recruitment of talent. An exploration was also conducted into the appropriateness of a talent management model for this particular party. The researcher identified that a formalised Human Resource structure was not practiced.

In the light of this analysis the researcher recommends an adaptation of a talent management model to unite the entire workforce and to assist in the development of a better Human Resource practice.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Title

An exploration into the challenges associated with the recruitment of talent for a Political Party.

1.2 Background

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) from their research have developed a broad definition of talent:

> *"Talent consists of those individuals who can make a difference to organisational performance through their immediate contribution or, in the longer-term, by demonstrating the highest levels of potential"* (CIPD, 2014).

The term has had an extensive variation of definitions resulting in the majority of organisations adopting their own interpretations. Organisations have adopted a process called Talent Management to ensure that they have the talented individuals that they need (Armstrong, 2009). It is considered in Human Relations (HR) circles to be quite a novel process and it only emerged in the late 1990s. It is the process of *"attraction, identification, development, engagement, retention and deployment"* of those talented individuals by the organisation (CIPD, 2014). Talent management is viewed as one of the determining factors in assisting organisations in gaining competitive advantage during the recession. Despite the economic downturn and high unemployment, there is still a skills shortage. Therefore, organisations must improve their policies to ensure that they effectively attract, identify, develop and retain talent for the right roles (McDonnell, 2011).

However, talent management has also been categorised as being part of the 'War for Talent'. The phrase originated in the late 1990s by McKinsey & Company when they identified that organisations were suffering a talent shortage, particularly at the senior executive level and they predicted that it

would intensify (Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin and Michaels III, 1998). This has resulted in an increase in the competition for available talent. A majority of organisations are focusing on different methods of attraction in order to win today's war (Carter, 2011). Michaels, Hanfield-Jones and Axelrod (2001, p. 11) identified *"five imperatives for talent management"* to assist organisations in winning the war by using their talent as a competitive advantage. The researcher will expand further on the 'War for Talent' in chapter 2.

This organisation that this research is focused upon is a Political Party located in Ireland. They currently have over 30,000 members, almost 100 public representatives in the Oireachtas, 4 members in the European Parliament and 235 public representatives at local level. This research is concerning the National Office and their offices within the Irish Parliament (Leinster House) which are separate from the elected and voluntary members. The elected members namely 76 Teachtai Dála (TDs) and 24 Seanadoiri (Senators) collectively employ approximately 220 staff. While these are given HR support by the party they, are not employed by the party, but directly by the individual TDs and Senators. They are not the subject of this study but they are covered by the internal approach to recruitment. From the establishment of the Political Party in 1933, it has had an extensive impact on Irish politics and society. There are 30 employees within National Office and 20 situated in the Leinster House. The party also employs two independent HR Consultants to assist and provide advice on human resource practices for the organisation. The current recruitment approach that the organisation undertakes is an internal approach. They advertise internally when a role becomes available which gives current talent the opportunity to progress to another position. If this recruitment process is unsuccessful, the position is then advertised externally.

1.3 Research Aim

The primary aim of this dissertation is to explore the challenges that a Political Party encounters throughout the process of the attraction and recruitment of talent.

1.4 Research Objectives

The following research objectives will be addressed throughout this dissertation:

- To identify what elements attract talent to a Political Party,

- To investigate the main challenges a Political Party experiences in today's 'War for Talent',

- To explore the appropriateness of a talent management model within a Political Party.

1.5 Purpose of Research

The main purpose of this research is to see what challenges the organisation face in the recruitment of talent. Currently, the organisation does not implement a formal structure of talent management. They do practise certain elements of talent management.

The research will also explore if a talent management model would be appropriate to introduce as a human resource strategy. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with three senior employees and two HR consultants of the party who have a part to play in the recruitment process. They will be asked to give their insight into what they believe are the challenges that the party faces when attracting the right talent.

The aim is for the researcher to develop an understanding of how they face these challenges during the current 'War for Talent'. This area of research

will benefit the organisation in overcoming the current difficulties that they experience in the attraction and recruitment of talent.

1.6 Structure of Dissertation

1.6.1 Chapter 1: Introduction

The first chapter of the dissertation details the background of the research area. It identifies the importance of talent and talent management in relation to an organisations competitive advantage. It also introduces the phrase the 'War for Talent' which will be discussed further in chapter 2. It introduces the organisation for which the research is conducted, giving an explanation into the overall organisation. It states the aims and the overall objectives which this study will address.

1.6.2 Chapter 2: Literature Review

The second chapter provides a broad theoretical review of the literature surrounding the area of talent and talent management. The chapter begins by discussing the term of talent. The next section gives a definition of talent management and outlines the elements of the talent management process. The phrase the 'War for Talent' will be discussed. A specific article giving extensive insight, Michaels et al., (2001, p. 11) *"five imperatives for talent management"* is discussed in detail. The concepts of human capital and the human capital pipeline are discussed in relation to talent management. Political parties are analysed to give the context of the sector into which the research is focused.

1.6.3 Chapter 3: Methodology

The third chapter outlines the research aims and objectives of the overall research. The methodological approach adopted for the purpose of this research is discussed. The method of data collection, data analysis and selection of the research instrument is outlined.

1.6.4 Chapter 4: Findings, Analysis and Discussion

The fourth chapter outlines the findings from the interviews conducted. After the themes are identified, the researcher will analyse the findings. The discussion links the findings back to the literature review in chapter 2.

1.6.5 Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The fifth chapter aims to reflect on the overall conclusion of the research conducted. The researcher draws conclusions and recommendations for future research in the area of the recruitment of talent and talent management within a political party.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The objective of this literature review is to provide a broad theoretical outlook in which to place the discussions and findings of the following research dissertation.

The primary aim of this dissertation is to explore the challenges that are associated with the recruitment of talent for a political party. This chapter will identify talent and how it is employed in the framework of an organisations competitive advantage. The various definitions and elements of talent management will be discussed. The phrase the 'War for Talent' will be explored and a framework by Michaels et al., (2001, p. 11) *"the five imperatives for talent management"* will be discussed in relation to an organisation fighting the 'War for Talent'. The chapter further explores the theoretical outlook on human capital and the human capital pipeline linking it to the area of talent and talent management. The final part of this chapter will discuss political parties and the employment relationship and will lead into the overall conclusion of this chapter.

2.2 Talent

Talent is viewed as one of the key drivers for an organisations business strategy and a key competitive element in how they operate today (Manpower, 2011). Organisations that do not recognise their employees as a talent will not benefit in the competition in the 'War for Talent' (see p.19). The talent of today want to be emotionally, professionally and intellectually enriched in their positions. They want to be acknowledged by their senior management and by the overall organisation. Talent is a critical driver of company performance and competitive advantage (Carter, 2011). Tansley (2011) is of the opinion that an individual's behavioural aspects, knowledge, skills, competencies and capability determine the organisations talent. These individuals are inclined to display the potential to progress to more senior

roles and in the long term can add to the organisations overall performance and competitive advantage. The planning and strategic management of talent is crucial in the recruitment and retention of employees which will benefit the organisation in the long run (Farnham, 2010).

Organisational talent is commonly interpreted as individuals who are internal to the organisation and have the potential to reach high levels of accomplishment (Tansley, 2011). The identification of talent within an organisation can have an overall influence *"on how employees identify with their employer"* (Bjorkman, Ehrnrooth, MaKela, Smale and Sumelius, 2013, p. 199). This can be viewed as the employer or organisational branding. This is where the talent share similar views and values as the employer and this in return will display loyalty.

2.3 Defining Talent Management

The researcher did not locate one exact definition of talent management. It was found throughout the research that all definitions contained similar traits. The main similarities found were the following elements; the attraction, development, retention and transition of talent by the organisation. Armstrong (2011) defines talent management as the development and retention of individuals employed by organisations. It is the process *"through which employers anticipate and meet their needs for human capital"* (Cappelli, 2008, p. 1). D'Annunzio-Green (2008) identified that talent management is now a much more widely recognised concept that is directed at the attraction, retention, and development and transitioning of talented employees. The Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD) further expands on these definitions stating that:

> *"Talent management is the systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement, retention and deployment of those individuals who are of particular value to an organisation, either in view of their 'high potential' for the future or because they are fulfilling business/operation-critical roles"* (CIPD, 2014).

Michaels et al., (2001) concluded that the theory of talent management originally applied to the outlook of recruitment, but has since evolved into a common element of management practice. Reilly (2008, p. 1), defines talent management as a *"call to managers to give attention to the identification of the development needs of employees"*. Many cynics believe that talent management is just another human resource fad (Blass, Brockhoff and Oliveira, 2009). There are numerous organisations that dismiss this approach and can only see it being a successful resource in the short term. It is maintained by academics that if it is implemented successfully it can be an essential part of the overall business strategy (Kim, Williams, Rothwell and Penaloza, 2014).

Talent management in contrast to talent is the strategic flow and management of talent through an organisation (Iles, Preece and Chuai., 2011). Talent management has recently changed the opinions of human resource practitioners and management and as a result has become the *"hot new thing"* to get involved in (Ashton and Morton, 2005, p. 28). Senior executive management now recognise that the key to a successful and effective talent management programme depends on the cooperation of all of the departments across the length of the organisations operations (McCauley and Wakefield, 2006). It has also changed the views of organisations as it has proved to have changed the organisational activity through retaining and deploying their talent as conditions change and become more demanding (Gardner, Park, Smith and Willcher, 2013). This process can be referred to as a broad version of strategic human resource management which has the objective of maximising the organisations overall workforce productivity (Nagra, 2011).

Cappelli (2008) believes that talent management is quite simply the identification of the need for human capital by organisations and therefore implementing a development plan to meet these needs. Organisations that utilise their human capital or talent to the full capacity can be at a major advantage to that of their competitors in this ongoing 'War for Talent'. Human capital in relation to this research is the overall perspective and values of the workforce to the organisation. The measurement of labour

turnover and employee engagement levels through human capital measurement help an organisation to identify which system of human resource management will help the competitive advantage of the organisation (CIPD, 2012). This approach could be undertaken by an organisation considering the implementation of a talent management programme.

Stewart and Rigg (2011) further suggest that the approach in which an organisation undertakes a talent management programme depends on the overall understanding of the definition by management across all of the departments. The majority of the management within these organisations and private organisations prefer to hire in outside expertise, such as, an independent human resource consultant to meet the changing demands of recruitment and talent management in these changing times (Gardner et al., 2013). In relation to this dissertation, it was found through the research conducted that the political party have employed two independent consultants to assist and advise the party on any human resource issues that may arise and to assist them with the management of talent.

The majority of organisations that wish to pursue a talent management programme in order to attract, secure and retain the talented employees, they should have the appropriate procedures and structures in place. Therefore this will ensure that they attract, engage, recruit, develop and retain the talented individuals. These elements will guide the organisations to follow the appropriate vision and strategy of talent management (Oehley and Theron, 2010).

2.3.1 Elements of Talent Management

Throughout the extensive amount of literature reviewed by the researcher on talent management, they offer numerous structures of talent management systems or key concepts. An organisation willing to implement a talent management system can draw up their own system from any of the key concepts or elements (Blass et al., 2009). Many academics in recent times have drawn up their own models of talent management which they believe

are appropriate for the particular area that it is been applied to. Organisations can create their own model to implement, *"ideas can be drawn from any or many of them concurrently"* (Blass et al., 2009, p. 21). These systems can be modified or adjusted to suit the structure of the organisation by taking different elements from different talent management models. The Sloan, Hazucha and Katwyk (2003) (cited in Blass et al, 2009 p. 21-22) model demonstrates its five steps and key areas to be considered when developing a talent management system for an organisation. These five steps are:

a. Clarify the existing value proposition for talent to offer a fair value exchange to employees, i.e. what you want and what you are offering.

b. Identify the gaps in the talent pipeline, i.e. assess performance, potential, readiness and fit.

c. Choose the best sourcing solution to fill the gaps, i.e. outsource, develop, transform and acquire.

d. Align core talent management processes with the talent required to accomplish new strategies, i.e. attract, retain, select, transitioning, mobilising and developing.

e. Build organisational support mechanisms, i.e. governance framework, training, talent reviews, measuring and rewarding progress.

The introduction of talent management processes into organisations is usually a tool to realise specific outcomes (Oehley and Theron, 2010). As mentioned above organisations or in the case of this research a political party that are willing to draw up and implement a talent management system to suit their operational needs can draw from any of the above five steps presented by Sloan et al., (2003) (cited in Blass et al., 2009) and create their own system.

2.3.2 Talent Management Strategy

An organisation that either needs to review their current talent management practice or draw up a practice, can use the model figure 2 (see p. 22) by Romans and Lardner (2005, p. 17) *"The Human Capital Pipeline"* as a guideline, which carries similar traits to that of the Sloan et al., (2003) (cited in Blass et al., 2009) guideline as mentioned above. In figure 1.1, this model shows that talent management intercepts human resource management, succession planning and strategy. These elements draw on the recruitment, development and retention strategies which are essential in measuring and monitoring the organisation (Blass et al., 2009). Ashton and Morton (2005) maintain that talent management has become more strategic for organisations. A dynamic sourcing strategy for the organisation is essential in regards to talent management (Chambers, et al., 1998). However, Markus (2010) argued that it has been highlighted in recent years that organisations have concerns about the insufficiency of their talent management strategies.

FIGURE 1.1: Mapping the Talent Management (TM) Territory by Blass, Brockhoff and Oliveira (2009, p. 22).
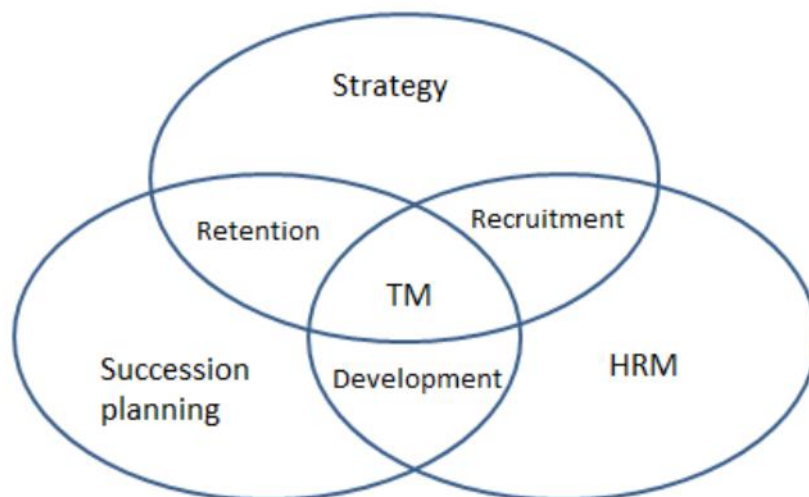
2.3.3 Talent Management: A new way to think about it.

Uncertainty is one of the major problems facing employers today. The factors which influence how employers change their strategies, structures

and operations are those of the organisations customers' demands, regulatory changes, their competitor's innovations and other conflicting outside factors (Cappelli, 2009).

2.3.4 Effective Talent Management

An organisation that has effective talent management in place can increase their ability to attract and retain the best talent. It also assists in the building of the foundation for the organisations through the ability of retaining and repositioning existing talent as circumstances change (Gardner, et al., 2013).

McKinsey & Company have developed a system which can help agencies such as business, non-profit sectors and government by developing insights into what drives a talent management system. This system is called the Talent System Assessment Tool. This tool draws on these insights and performs an analysis on the organisations overall practices and outcomes which as a result gives recommendations on which areas the organisation should focus on improving (McKinsey and Company, 2012b).

There are many benefits for an organisation from implementing a talent management programme. It can aid individuals in the workforce by advancing their career growth. It can also determine and identify who the higher performing individuals are and they can form part of an elite group of talent to aid the organisations competitiveness (Swailes, 2013).

2.3.5 Ineffectiveness of Talent Management

From reviewing the literature, the ineffectiveness of talent management systems appears to be on the part of the organisation rather than the concept itself. The failures involved tend to include supply and demand. This is evident where there are too many available employees on one side and then on the other side having too little talent to provide the skills and competencies that are required (Cappelli, 2009).

The failure to adapt to talent management as a recruitment system for the required talent and skills that are critical to the organisation therefore will be at a losing end when it comes to attracting the individuals that they need (Deloitte, 2014). The talent management system needs to have support from all departments within the organisation. If this is not implemented appropriately it can result in the process being unsuccessful.

The basic people management challenge for many of the organisations of today is *"getting the right people with the right skills into the right jobs"* (Cappelli, 2008, p. 1). This is interpreted as a practical definition of talent management and it has also been compared to the basic task of a supply chain of an organisations operations.

Cappelli (2009) states that there are two great risks to talent management:

- **Cost**- a mismatch of employees and talent with a resulting effect on business demand due to too much or not enough talent to meet their requirements. This can often result in redundancies.

- **Investments**- the failure to retain employees which will result in a loss of the investment towards talent.

2.3.6 Human Capital and Talent Management
Human Capital is a term that is broadly used within human resource management to describe individuals at work and their collective abilities, skills, capacity and knowledge to develop and innovate (CIPD, 2012). It refers to the efficiency and ability of individuals to transform raw materials and capital into goods and services. This is the productive capacity of the workforce (Son, 2010). Organisations are beginning to see their human capital as talent, are starting to think of how they can utilise their skills and expertise to increase their competitive edge. They are also believed to have high levels of human capital (Florida, 2002). Bhatnagar (2007, p. 641) maintains that *"talent has become the key differentiator for human capital management and for leveraging competitive advantage"*. This change by

organisations in regards to their staff has resulted in talent management moving to the top of the priority chain (Scott and Ali, 2013). Human Capital plays a vital role in economic growth (Son, 2010). Connecting human capital to the economy productively is essential in the long term to the effectiveness of the innovation environment (Proenza, 2010). However there are still obstacles present to human capital with talent shortage a major problem (McKinsey&Company, 2012c).

The value of human capital to an organisation depends greatly on their internal and external contingencies (Brymer, Molloy and Gilbert, 2013). The organisations leaders must value the experience and knowledge that is within the company so that each of the individuals can learn more effectively (Josan, 2013). It has been said that human capital is subject to social risk because the employees involved control the amount of effort and commitment applied to the company's overall objective. Human capital can be of a competitive advantage to a company if it complements the organisations overall strategy and attributes (Brymer et al., 2013).

Instead of organisations leaving the government to transform and improve the training and education systems, companies can make a strategic decision and take the initiative to develop the talent pipelines and skilled workforce that they need. In some organisations the ability to fill their talent gaps effectively can aid with their competitive advantage (McKinsey&Company, 2012a). Talent management has emerged in the last ten years as an element within the human capital strategy (Nagra, 2011). This in the area of the human capital strategy covers an extent of human resource functions mainly focused on the areas of attraction, retention, management and development of a high-potential talent workforce.

On assessment of the human capital of an organisation, with the individuals identified as talent, the organisation can identify which human resource intervention would be appropriate to *"drive business performance"* (CIPD, 2012). This is where talent management as a model would be relevant in relation to human capital management if an organisation decided to take this approach to gain a competitive advantage through the application of their

workforce. The model by Romans and Lardner (2005, p. 17) *"The human capital pipeline"* will be discussed below in relation to talent and talent management.

2.3.7 Human Capital Pipeline

The human capital pipeline began with the inexperienced workforce of organisations (Cappelli, 2005). Overtime Romans and Lardner (2005, p. 17), developed a model (see figure 1.2) to demonstrate the management of talent through the employment life cycle, starting with hire and ending with retire. This model was named the Human Capital Pipeline. This model is a *"systems thinking"* model developed on the assumption that all of the organisations systems and departments are interlinked. This model secures a steady pipeline for the human capital group to become accustomed to when they are issuing positions to their available talent (McKinsey&Company, 2012b).

In order for Hughes Supply to continue with their success a new strategic human resource team was established. The main priority for this team was to set up a new talent management program in order to attract and retain the required talent for the company (Romans, Frost and Ford, 2006). If an organisation developed a human capital pipeline, it can create important advantages for both the employees and for the hiring that they themselves perform (Brymer et al., 2013).

Figure 1.2.: The Human Capital Pipeline by Romans and Lardner, (2005, p.17).
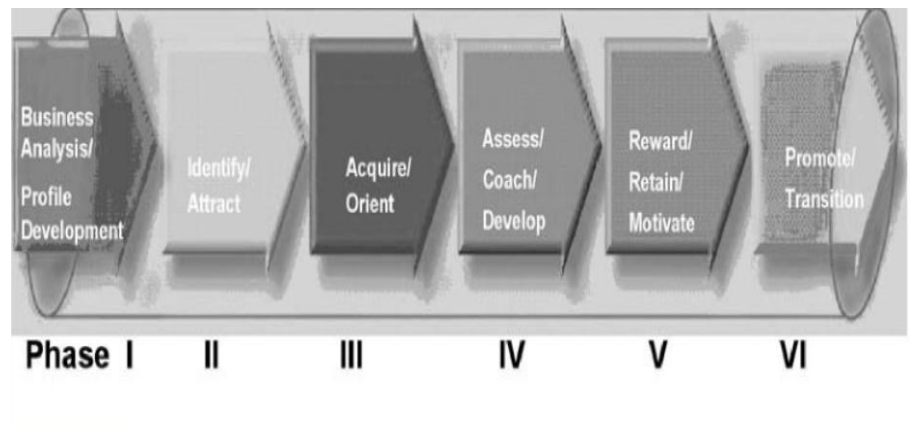
2.4 The 'War for Talent'

According to Carter (2011), talent is the most important resource for organisations in today's fast-moving competitive arena; their strategic plans are only as good as the people it has at their disposal to perform them. In the McKinsey Article it states that superior talent will be the future source of competitive advantage. The article also concludes that any organisation that is seeking to achieve competitive advantage through the resources of their readily available talent must create a talent mind-set throughout the entire organisation (Chambers et al., 1998). The talent mind-set would start from the top senior executive role right down throughout the overall organisation. This term a 'talent mind-set' has been referred to quite frequently throughout the literature researched. The term will be expanded on further in this literature review.

In the 'War for Talent' there will be promises of training and further opportunities outlined which will appeal to the talent (Carter, 2011). The opportunity of further development and progression is likely to be of a benefit to turnover levels as the talent will prefer to be recognised for their skills and that they are also identified for the potential of further development within the organisation.

Fifteen years on from when McKinsey created the phrase the 'War for Talent' it is still quite evident to many human capital professionals that the war is still strong. Today organisations need to be innovative and specific about how they acquire and develop the talent that they need (McKinsey&Company, 2012c). This is evident in a report conducted by the CIPD, which found that a proportion of organisations had reported that the competition for well-qualified talent has increased greatly from 20% in 2009 to 62% in 2013 (CIPD, 2013). This further adds to what McKinsey & Company (2012c), states above that the war is still strong. In today's 'War for Talent', senior management need to concentrate on job enrichment to attract the quality candidates (Carter, 2011).

Some academics believe that the term 'War for Talent' is still at risk of becoming another fad as there is not yet a clear definition of the term (Reilly, 2008). Pfeffer (2001) has also dismissed the phrase as he believes that there are numerous problems associated with it. The problems and criticisms of this concept are mentioned by many academics that are under the impression that organisations are downplaying any talent that is already present in the workforce and that in turn they are recruiting exclusively. This would have a negative effect on the morale of the workforce and talent already available for the organisations disposal. On review of the literature it is evident that this phrase is still relevant to the competitive nature of attraction and recruitment of talent for organisations today.

Michaels et al., (2001, p. 11) have identified *"five imperatives for talent management"* that organisations must focus and act on in order to win the 'War for Talent'. This is mainly focused on the managerial level and using talent as a competitive advantage. The imperatives will be discussed in detail below. These imperatives are:

1. Talent mind-set: the organisation must embrace a talent mind-set.

2. Employee value proposition: the organisation must create a winning employee value proposition.

3. Recruitment strategy: the organisation will design a winning recruitment strategy.

4. Development: the organisation must introduce a development system.

5. Individualise their people: the organisation individualise and maintain their talented people.

2.4.1 Talent mind-set

The term talent mind-set can be interpreted as an ethos by embedding values and behaviours which supports the view that everyone is worthy of development (Ashton and Morton, 2005). When an organisation has adopted a talent mind-set it has united the individual and collective efforts of its entire workforce. It also directs its practice, culture and ambition (Cheese, Thomas and Craig, 2008). It is the belief that if you build your talent effectively, it will assist in the achievement of the overall objectives of the organisation (Michaels, et al., 2001). McCauley and Wakefield (2006) are in agreement with this concept and believe that in order for an individual to develop such a mind-set, that they themselves must view the workplace through the eyes of a talent manager. A workforce that embraces this element will as a result strive in the ongoing 'War for Talent'.

2.4.2 Employee value proposition (EVP)

An employee value proposition consists of what an organisation has to offer to their existing employees or potential employees, it is what they are offering or intend to offer to attract and retain the talent (Reilly and Williams, 2011; Armstrong, 2009). The EVP of an organisation *"expresses the terms of employment- what is expected of employees and what they can expect to derive from employment with the organization"* (Nalbantian and Jeffay, 2011, p. 459). It complements the employee element of the talent strategy and assists in the accomplishment of organisational goals. In order

for an organisation to implement a winning EVP they must move forward from presenting a single EVP to all of their employees. This would involve the customisation of the organisations current value proposition to meet the needs of potential employees (Cheese et al., 2008). EVP displays a close relationship with the employer brand and can also be displayed in terms of intrinsic reward and extrinsic rewards. Where intrinsic rewards are in terms of job satisfaction and extrinsic rewards are in terms of training, salary and benefits (Reilly and Williams, 2011). The employer brand and EVP have a close relationship in relation to the attraction of talent to an organisation. They are values that the talent share with the organisation and the talented individuals expectations from employment with the organisation.

2.4.3 Recruitment strategy

Recruitment is the process of attracting, finding and retaining the people that an organisation needs (Armstrong, 2009). Cheese et al., (2008) argue that recruitment as a process is only as fast and effective as you can make it and that the organisation needs to ensure that this is implemented. Blass (2009) believes that there is a conflict for organisations on whether they should recruit for today or recruit for the future. Deloitte (2014) suggested that organisations are now competing in a battlefield to recruit and acquire talent. This terminology of a 'battlefield' as suggested by Deloitte (2014) corresponds with Michaels et al., (2001) concept of the 'War for Talent'. Michaels et al., (2001) believe that in order for managers to have a competitive advantage in the 'War for Talent' that they should rebuild and rethink the organisations current recruitment strategy. In order for management to achieve this rebuild they need to adopt a proactive and aggressive approach geared at all levels at all times in the search for talent (Carmichael, Emsell, Collins and Haydon, 2011). Cheese et al (2008) also agree with this as they found that talent is now becoming more and more difficult to discover and recruit. It has also been suggested by Deloitte (2014), that from their recent research that recruiting can be compared to marketing. Organisations should rebuild their recruitment strategy around partnering with the corporate marketing to target candidates and employees

through the communication strategy and employer branding. This would ensure that they are at a competitive advantage in the attraction and recruitment of the acquired talent.

2.4.4 Development

Garavan, Carbery and Rock (2011) found that from existing evidence that most organisations are developing talent development processes unique to their organisation. Michaels et al., (2001) believe that winning the 'War for Talent' involves a lot more than just the recruiting aspect; development of talent is also an essential component. The organisation needs to show commitment towards continuous development as it is critical to attracting and retaining individuals (Blass, 2009; Clarke, 2001; Michaels et al., 2001). Thorne and Pellant (2007), state that no organisation should focus all of their attention for the development of talent only on one part of their human capital. It is important that all individuals within the organisation are recognized in the same light and that their needs are met. Organisations that provide incentives in terms of further training and development are more likely to be at an advantage in the attraction of top talent to join their workforce. Training and development in the human capital perspective are found to be as equally as important to both employees and employers as pay and benefits and are considered as an investment in the long term (Cook, 2008; Garavan, Costine and Hearty, 1995).

2.4.5 Individualise your people

Organisations that consistently upgrade their talent pool and implement a talent review process are continuously differentiating their firm and giving employees incentives to remain within the organisation (Michaels et al., 2001). Senior management need to realise the importance of attracting and retaining talent groups to the organisations. Retention of these talent groups is both beneficial and important to the organisation in relation to strategic objectives and competitive advantage (Vaiman, Scullion and Collings, 2012). Organisations need to value and manage their talent which in the

future will result in the attraction of future graduates (Pricewaterhouse Coopers, 2011). Retention is one of the main outcomes intended by talent management strategies (Oehley and Theron, 2010). Retention is a key result in the overall battle of the 'War for Talent'.

2.5 Recruitment of Talent

Recruitment is the process of attracting the appropriately qualified candidates for a particular position who convey the required competencies for that position (Pilbeam and Corbridge, 2006). The attraction of candidates or in this instance talent is an important objective of the recruitment method for organisations (Rees and French, 2010). Guarino (2007) is in the belief that if an organisation is willing to discuss talent attraction and recruitment that firstly, they must understand the landscape. In order for an organisation to attract talent, firstly they must figure out exactly what type of talent is needed (Lawler, 2008). At the recruitment phase the organisation needs to see beyond fetching the talent that they need, to shifting responsibility to constantly attracting the talent needed (Guarino, 2007). It is important for the organisation to identify the appropriate skills needed in order for it to work alongside the overall business strategy. The identification of the critical skills for the overall strategy is a step toward the organisation identifying the critical talent pools which the organisation should focus their performance on (Lawler, 2008).

The phrase talent attraction is favoured by many academics as it emphasizes the competiveness of recruiting, whereas many other academics prefer the term talent acquisition (Guarino, 2007). It is believed that the best strategy to undertake in order to come out ahead in the 'War for Talent' is to target and attract the right individuals rather than recruit everyone in sight (Erickson and Gratton, 2007). In order for an organisation to succeed they need "to attract the best, the best active recruitment strategies are needed" (Kim, 2008, p. 640). This always applies to the organisational values and employer brand as it conveys to the candidate or new recruit the working

environment within the organisation and in return the talent will reward the organisation with their loyalty.

An organisations ability to attract external talent greatly depends upon how the potential recruits view the organisation and whether they share views and values of that organisation (Tansley, Turner, Foster, Harris, Sempik, Stewart and Williams, 2007). This is relevant to the element of employer branding of the organisation. Employer branding will be discussed in the next section. Individuals choose to work for this organisation, not for the wages that they are paid, which differs from organisation to organisation, but because *"it feels right"* (Guarino, 2007, p. 116). This is what motivates these individuals or talent to work for these organisations. The industry or sector images alongside the employer brand are important factors in the organisations ability to attract talent. Another factor which has come across in the academic literature is how the candidate or potential talent identifies with the organisation's values, goals and the mission which they have adopted. This is also a factor in the attraction of potential candidates (Tansley, et al., 2007).

It was found that there is little research on how newly established organisations overcome resource constraints on service innovation by recruiting their talent from competitors. Many organisations are inclined to attract talent from their competitors as the recruits or talent may already have obtained the required skills and knowledge in a similar practice (Rao and Drazin, 2002). The competition for talent is increasing every day and the stakes are getting higher (Guarino, 2007).

Lawler (2008) believes that the areas or positions within organisations where the scarcity of talent is evident deserve special attention along with development and retention when it comes to talent management and may require extra efforts and resources in order for this problem to be addressed. It has become more and more evident that the norm has shifted for organisations. It has shifted from employees in search of a job, where now it is shown that more and more employers have to go in search of the talent

required (Guarino, 2007). This is where the competitive element comes into place.

2.5.1 Employer Brand and Attraction

Employer brand is relevant to the area of recruitment in relation to the attraction of potential talent. An organisation that implements a strong employer brand creates many advantages in the attraction of potential talent. Tansley et al., (2007), believe that if the organisation creates an attractive employer brand that it is a factor that will attract external talent. The image of the organisation is the main factor in this instance. It is how the employer and organisation are perceived by the potential candidates and as result how this perception influences the attracted talent. The status and image of the brand plays an important role in the attraction of talent and the best people (Kim, 2008). It is important to employees that organisations share the same values and this in turn will result in increased loyalty and motivation from the employees (Bjorkman et al., 2013). Tansley et al., (2007) also found in their report that organisations who conveyed a poor employer brand were lacking in the image that the candidates were mainly attracted to. The advantages of a strong employer brand for an organisation in the attraction of talent are:

- Assists in attracting the best candidates for the organisation in order for them to win the 'War for Talent'.

- Shared values between the individual and organisation.

- The applicants are aware of what the organisation stands for and as a result making them an employer of choice.

In order for an employer brand to become strong it has to constantly be reviewed and kept up to date in terms of resources. This ensures that the values of the brand continue to be delivered (Tansley, et al., 2007). Guarino (2007, p. 115), illustrates that it is essential for an organisation to have a

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strong employer brand, *"you won't even get the chance to make the hire if you don't have an employer brand to attract talent"*.

In relation to a political party, employer branding is quite an important factor. Kim (2008) believes that having an employer or organisational branding would be quite a useful strategy to utilise. The fact that a political party are in government or in opposition would not make a difference to potential talent as the employer brand would be the main attraction for them. They tend to follow the same political vision and values of the organisation. The political party can improve its brand power if they improve the recruitment process and the overall organisation itself. The talent that they acquire are in fact the individuals who share the values of the political party.

2.5.2 Implications for practice

In recent research conducted by Tansley et al., (2007) they identified that the image of the organisation or the sector in which they operated can have either a negative or positive impact on the attraction of talent. They also found that the strong employer brand of an organisation creates many advantages for talent management as mentioned above. The branding of an organisation only conveys reality if the organisation truly is an *"employer of choice"* (Guarino, 2007, p. 116). This is mainly what is needed in order to attract the right talent to fit the organisation.

2.5.3 Development of Talent

One of the major issues of recruitment for employers identified by a report conducted by the CIPD 2006 recruitment, retention and turnover survey is that potential candidates are lacking in specialist skills that are required for the positions (Tansley et al., 2007). Organisations face many challenges when trying to fill key positions. This has crept up on many of them as they would have in the past considered employee development as an employee benefit rather than a benefit for the organisation (Ready and Conger, 2007). This is linked in with the topic of the 'War for Talent'. An internal approach

to development can advance the already available talent within the organisation. The opportunity of progression can assist the potential internal talent with the motivation to develop their skills which in turn will assist the competitive advantage of the overall organisation.

External recruitment has increased in many organisations today, because they have not implemented an appropriate internal development program which is a feature of a talent management program within an organisation. This in turn causes problems in the area of retention as this discourages the potential talent within the organisation as they have not been offered opportunities of development and progression and in turn can lead to a high turnover rate. The only way for these challenges to be overcome is for the organisations *"to recognize these problems and adapt to the uncertainty that drives them"* (Cappelli, 2009, p. 7).

2.5.4 Retaining the Right Talent

The loss of talented employees is a significant cost for organisations. In the past few years, many organisations have been caught up in downsizing their companies due to the recession. As a result of this they have not taken into consideration the fact that the loss of talented employees can have an effect in the organisations overall competiveness (Dychtwald, Erickson and Morison, 2004). Through the research conducted it has been found that many organisations in order to retain their staff they tend to match the offers of their main competitors as the 'War for Talent' is so prevalent during these times (Erickson and Gratton, 2007).

Throughout the research conducted it is evident that many companies believe that what truly defines them from their main competitors is the ability to both *"attract and retain the right people"* (Erickson and Gratton, 2007, p. 4). Another factor in the retention of employees is how the overall organisation identifies with their employees, do they have positive feelings about the organisation and does the organisation enhance their self-motivation and self-esteem (Bjorkman et al, 2013).

2.6 Political Parties and Talent

It has been continuously highlighted throughout literature that political parties and organisations are lacking in previous research in relation to their employees (Gallagher and Marsh, 2004). The study of political party employees is one of the most under-searched fields in the study of political parties (Webb and Kolodney, 2006). They are quite "complex multilevel organisations" but all parties are compatible in the fact that they share a similar identity and purpose, sometimes sharing similar objectives (Hague and Harrop, 2007, p. 231). The organisational aspect of the political party in Irish politics is located in their central office (Coakley and Gallagher, 1996). The central office is referred to as the headquarters for the purpose of this research. The study is based on the full time employees who provide the back office support to the party and these employees are based either in the national headquarters or Leinster House.

Political parties are in competition with private and public organisations in the race to recruit and retain potential talent for their back office support (Kim, 2008). Political parties mainly operate their human resource approach through similar elements and systems to that of private organisations.

In any individual's decision to accept a staff position in a political party back office, there are many important factors to be considered. The declining trust of the public in the government and the politicians previous is one important factor, career opportunities are quite limited in political parties and the stress of the lifestyle choice and the hours worked are also factors (Riches, 2006). The organisations human resource department have to prepare new strategies to address these ongoing issues in order to overcome all of the above challenges (Kim, 2008). The element of employer branding is one motivation that talented individuals tend to find attractive about a political party. The recruitment objective tends to differ to a private organisation as they refer to their recruitment process as elite recruitment (Hague and Harrop, 2007). The phrase 'elite recruitment' can be compared to that of the process of the attraction of talent.

Political parties experience challenges quite similar to that of private organisations. The challenge in the recruitment of talent is mainly in relation to attraction. The next chapter will use semi-structured interviews to explore what the main challenges of recruitment are for the party. The research will explore whether introducing a talent management model would be appropriate within the human resource process of the party.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the area of talent and talent management. It explored the relevance of talent management to human capital management. It proceeded to look at the literature surrounding the phrase, the 'War for Talent', in particular around the area of using talent to give an organisation competitive advantage. The recruitment of talent is discussed detailing the areas of attraction, employer brand, implications of practice, development and attraction. The final part introduces the background to a political party and their human resource practices.

The primary aim of this study is to explore what the employees perceive are the challenges associated with the recruitment of talent. The purpose of this literature review was to outline the importance of talent and talent management practices and the relevance of these interpretations in relation to a political party. The majority of this review is focused on talent and talent management from an organisations perspective. The following chapters set out to look at these perspectives in the view of the employees and senior management of a political party. The next chapter, chapter 3 will provide an outline of the methodology used to address the aim and objectives of this dissertation.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the framework adopted by the researcher answering the research questions and objectives. It gives a detailed account of the process undertaken by the researcher. Firstly, the research objectives are identified. Then the research philosophy is discussed in relation to this dissertation. The research approach adopted in order to collect the data is also discussed. The researcher also outlines the strategy and choice of research in relation to this study. The purpose of the selection of the sample for this study is investigated. The possible limitations, time constraints and ethical considerations that the researcher encountered are also detailed.

3.2 Research Objectives

This dissertation identifies a framework to address the challenges that a political party experiences in the recruitment of talent. The following are the research objectives which this research will address:

- To identify what elements attract talent to a Political Party,

- To investigate the main challenges a Political Party experiences in today's 'War for Talent',

- To explore the appropriateness of a talent management model within a Political Party.

3.2. Research Philosophy

The term research philosophy relates to the *"development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge"* (Saunders, et al., 2009, p. 107). This is important as it assists the researcher in determining which research designs and approaches will best fit their research aims and objectives.

Epistemology is *"a branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge and what constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study"* (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 591). The researcher investigated epistemology when deciding which approach to undertake. Quinlan (2011, p. 96), in addition to Saunders et al, (2009) explains that it also relates to *"the processes through which knowledge is created"*. Epistemology can be split up into three main categories namely: positivism, realism and interpretivism. The researcher looked at both positivism and interpretivism in relation to their research.

3.2.1 Positivism

The positivist sees the world as having one reality that is objective and that we are all a part of (Quinlan, 2011). This approach is favoured by many researchers as they maintain that this approach is more reliable as they are *"not influenced by the unpredictable behaviour of human beings"* (Biggam, 2008, p. 93). A researcher conducts a positivist approach if they are sure that what they observe will provide credible data and results (Saunders et al., 2009). This approach is adopted by a researcher who prefers to work with facts rather than the individual's opinion.

3.2.2 Interpretivism

Interpretivism is favoured as an approach where the researchers *"believe that an understanding of the world can only be accessed through social interaction, and that such interaction in turn is understood in terms of the context of the interaction (time and place)"* (Biggam, 2008, p. 222). The interpretivist researcher believes that interaction with people, rather than with facts, can provide a more grounded interpretation of the findings from conducting interviews. This leads the researcher to interpret the world through their own individual and unique way (Quinlan, 2011). The challenge of this approach for the researcher is to have the ability *"to enter the social world of their research subjects and understand their world from their point of view"* (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 116).

In order for the research questions to be addressed, the researcher had to decide whether to use a positivist or interpretivist approach. In the case of this research, the researcher has decided to take an interpretivist approach to address the research questions. The aim of this research is to get an understanding of the challenges that face a political party when they are recruiting talent. As the research was on the area of recruitment and the perspectives of the employees and management, this approach was more appropriate as the data would be collected through interviews with the researcher receiving the individual's opinions. The researcher decided that a qualitative approach would be the best method to explore the challenges, as the research questions could only be addressed through the experiences and opinions of the interviewees. Neuman (2007, p. 43) supports the qualitative approach by stating *"Interpretive researchers tend to prefer and trust qualitative data"*.

3.3 Research Approach

There are two directions researchers approach the building and testing of theory (Neuman, 2007). They must decide on whether to take a deductive or inductive approach. The deductive approach is where a theory and hypothesis are developed, whereas the inductive approach is where data is collected and a theory is developed as a result of the data analysis (Saunders et al., 2009). The researcher will discuss both approaches in the context of this research below.

3.3.1 Deductive Approach

In taking a deductive approach, the researcher may have ideas of how the world operates and therefore want to test these against reliable materials (Neuman, 2007). This approach is mainly used in quantitative research. The reason for this is because it emphasises the scientific process of *"moving from theory to data"* (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 127).

3.3.3 Inductive Approach

In the inductive approach, the researcher begins with *"detailed observations of the world and move(s) toward more abstract generalizations and ideas"* (Neuman, 2007, p. 30). This assists the researcher in formulating a theory collected through the data. This approach is concerned with *"gaining an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events"* (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 127).

In the case of this research, the inductive approach was a more appropriate method for the researcher to undertake. The researcher conducted interviews in order to obtain a close understanding of the research background. The researcher considered conducting surveys but decided against it as they believed that they would not get all the relevant data required to answer the research objectives, and therefore, that any data from surveys might be difficult to consider objectively. Saunders et al., (2009, p. 127) emphasises that inductive approach gathers a *"close understanding of the research context"* and through *"the collection of qualitative data"*.

3.4 Research Strategy

In taking the research strategies into consideration, the researcher was aware that *"no research strategy is inherently superior or inferior to any other"* (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 141). The researcher had to take a number of considerations into account when deciding on what research strategy would best suit the aims and objectives of the research. Saunders et al., (2007, p. 141) advises that when considering the research strategy, researchers should take the following point into account *"will the strategy enable you to answer your particular research question and meet your objectives"*.

3.4.1 Exploratory Approach

Upon reviewing of the literature, the researcher found that there was no evidence of previous research completed on the challenges associated with the recruitment of talent for a political party. Based upon this finding, an exploratory approach was undertaken as Neuman (2007, p. 366) maintains that the exploratory approach is appropriate when *"research into an area that has not been studied and in which a researcher wants to develop initial ideas and a more focused research question"*. In exploratory research, the researcher formulates appropriate questions that can be addressed in future research when investigating a new area (Neuman, 2007). The researcher drew appropriate questions from the objectives for the interviews (see appendix). This approach is also useful if the researcher wishes to clarify their understanding of the nature of the problem and they *"must be willing to change their direction as a result of new data that appear and new insights that occur"* (Saunders, et al., 2009, p. 140). This was also a reason why the researcher decided to take an exploratory approach to the research, as they felt that qualitative was a more appropriate way to investigate the area. The exploratory researcher tends to favour qualitative research methods (Neuman, 2007).

Saunders et al., (2009, p. 140) have presented three principal ways of conducting exploratory research:

- A search of the literature;

- Interviewing 'experts' in the subject;

- Conducting focus group interviews.

The researcher examined the available academic literature and books and searched numerous websites that were relevant to the area of research. These fall into the category of secondary data, or *"reanalysing data that have already been collected for some other purpose"* (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 256). Interviews were conducted to obtain the primary data for the

purpose of this research, with three senior employees and two HR consultants involved with the recruitment process within the different sections of the political party. All of the appropriate data was gathered and analysed.

3.5 Research Choice

The researcher had to establish whether quantitative or qualitative methods of research would be more suited to this research. In order to make this decision, the researcher had to understand the difference between the methods. Saunders et al., (2009, p. 482) clarifies that quantitative analysis is performed *"through the use of diagrams and statistics"*, whereas in qualitative analysis it is performed "through the use of conceptualisation". Biggam (2008, p. 86) distinguishes quantitative as research that *"answers the how questions"* whereas qualitative research are left to answering the *"why questions"*. Quantitative is generally *"used as a synonym for any data collection technique"* for example a questionnaire, or a procedure of data analysis using statistics or graphs that create or use numerical data (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 151). Qualitative is generally used *"as a synonym for any data collection technique"* for example an interview, where the data analysis categorises data that either creates or uses non-numerical data (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 151).

Qualitative researchers generally do not associate their research with measurement and would not be in favour of the scientific perspective (Quinlan, 2011). It *"refers to all non-numeric data or data that have not been quantified and can be a product of all research strategies"* (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 480). Neuman (2007, p. 372), defines qualitative data as *"information in the form of words, pictures, sounds, visual images, or objects"*. This supports where Quinlan (2011, p. 262) stated that *"Qualitative data are generated by observation when semi-structured or unstructured observation schedules are used"*. Qualitative researchers tend to borrow theory from the individuals that they study and place them within the framework of their natural settings (Neuman, 2007). This is evident in

this research as the interviews will be analysed and discussed in the next chapter in relation to the participant's opinions and experiences. Therefore this method will allow the researcher to develop theory from their data collected (Saunders et al., 2009).

The researcher chose to use qualitative research as their method for this study. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The interview questions were constructed in order to answer the research aim and objectives (see appendix 1). The researcher was aware that the process of analysis of qualitative data was going to be quite demanding and that it was not to be seen as the *"easy option"* (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 484). The data collected from the interviews is analysed and discussed in the following chapter. The full transcripts of the interviews will be made available for examination should they be requested.

3.6 Sample

A sample is a selected segment of the population which is used for the purpose of the research (Bryam and Bell, 2011). The sample chosen for the purpose of this research are three senior employees of the political party and two HR consultants involved in the recruitment process. The qualitative researcher differs from the quantitative approach as the qualitative when selecting a sample, *"rarely determine sample size in advance and have limited knowledge about the larger group"* (Neuman, 2007, p. 141). The quantitative researcher uses a more mathematical pre-planned approach to sampling.

The researcher conducted five interviews for the purpose of this research. As the research was based on one political party, the researcher had to select individuals from each of the three different departments from within the organisation. A political party is quite a complex structure. The sample selected all have a role in the recruitment process involving employees, either within their department or of the overall organisation. These were selected as they could give the researcher an insight into how a political party operates and they could provide details of the recruitment challenges.

3.7 Research Instrument

The research technique that the researcher chose to collect their data was through conducting interviews. The researcher felt that an interview would help them *"to gather valid and reliable data"* relevant to their research aims and objectives (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 318). The researcher favoured this technique as a research instrument because of the *"flexibility of the interview"* (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Interviews can be conducted on a one-to-one basis or they can be conducted over the telephone (Saunders et al., 2009). The researcher felt that interviews would enable them to get a better understanding on the challenges that the political party faces in regards to recruiting talent. The researcher also knew that while conducting the interviews that they *"must be empathetic and must not influence the responses in anyway"* (Quinlan, 2011, p. 221).

3.7.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews, when used to gather data, fall under the term *"non-standardised"*, where data is usually *"analysed qualitatively"* (Saunders et al., p. 321). The interviewer carried out five face-to-face interviews. Face-to-face interviews are said to give the *"highest response rates"* (Neuman, 2007, p. 190). The interviewees were asked a specific set of questions, but the semi-structured interview allowed the interviewer to also ask questions that were included in the guide in response to answers given by the interviewee (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This format also allowed the interviewer to have a list of themes and questions to refer to during the interviews. This allowed the interviews to vary from interviewee to interviewee (Saunders et al., 2009). The researcher could also utilise follow-up probing questions to pursue further information on any response that was given to questions (Quinlan, 2011; Barriball and While, 1994).

As each of the interviewees is based in different areas of the political party, the researcher was able to ask slightly different questions to address the different processes and challenges. This method of data collection allowed

the researcher to understand the complexity of the political party and to understand the different approaches and elements of the challenges they experience through recruitment.

3.8 Time Horizons

The researcher was aware that there would be a time constraint when conducting the interviews for the purpose of this research. The researcher took into consideration that the employees of the political party would be taking holidays during the summer months of July and August due to the Houses of the Oireachtas being out of session. The Dáil went into recess on Thursday 17th July 2014 and the Seanad went into recess on Thursday 31st July (Oireachtas, 2014). Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 76) clarify that *"all research is constrained by time and resources"*. The interviews were conducted over a two week period in July.

3.9 Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data collection was conducted through semi-structured face-to-face interviews as mentioned above. This style of interviewing allowed the researcher to probe any of the answers given in order to obtain a better understanding. The researcher carried out five interviews with individuals involved in the recruitment process of the organisation. The Party have employees located in their central office, in communications in Leinster House and also in administration in Leinster House. All of the three different areas of the party have different recruitment processes. The General Secretary of the party was interviewed as he is involved with the overall recruitment of the party. Also interviewed were: the two Independent HR Consultants who have no political ties with the party but are used by the party as a HR role and the two senior employees in Leinster House. These interviewees were selected as they could give their different views and outline the challenges that they experience in their respective areas when assisting in the recruitment of talent.

The researcher contacted each of the interviewees by telephone in order to ask them to be a part of the research. The connection was made to these individuals with the permission and assistance of the General Secretary. At the start of each interview, the researcher made it clear to the participants that any information gathered would be kept confidential and permission was also requested at commencement of interview to record the proceedings. The recording device used was the mobile phone belonging to the researcher. These recordings assisted the researcher in the transcription and analysing of the findings. The interviews varied in length due to each participant. They ranged from 15 minutes to approximately 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted in an appropriate time and setting suitable to the interviewees. Two of the interviews took place in Leinster House and the remaining three were conducted in the central office. The participants were all asked a series of similar questions which assisted the researcher in gathering an understanding in how the different areas of recruitment and administration within the political party operate.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics refers to the conduct of the researcher's behaviour regarding the participants who are willing to be a part of the study (Saunders et al., 2009). Confidentiality and anonymity are two basic aspects of research ethics (Quinlan, 2011).

The researcher obtained permission from the General Secretary of the political party to carry out the research. The researcher approached the potential participants and informed them of the purpose of the research study. The researcher explained to the interviewees at the beginning of the interview that all of the information obtained would be handled confidentially, that the participation in the interview was voluntary and that the participant would have the opportunity to withdraw from the interview at any stage. The researcher also informed the interviewees that there would be no risk to them or the organisation due to participation in this research project and that their data would remain anonymous.

3.11 Limitations

The researcher was aware that one of the limitations of this research would be access and the time constraints. The researcher had to be granted access by the political party to approach their employees. Fortunately the access was granted promptly. As the research was conducted during the summer months, the annual leave of the interviewees had to be taken into consideration and the interviews had to fit in with their schedule. The findings of this research are only based on one political party but it consists of three very different viewpoints. The small number of interviewees is also a limitation to the results obtained.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter the researcher will illustrate the findings of the primary data collected. The researcher conducted five semi-structured interviews as previously indicated in chapter 3. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as they allow the researcher to be flexible in the questions to be covered which may vary from interview to interview (Saunders et al., 2009).

Three interviewees are senior employees of the Political Party which this research is focused. Two independent Human Resource (HR) consultants whom the political party employ to assist them with HR issues in their Headquarters (HQ) and in Leinster House were also interviewed. Three senior employees of the political party interviewed were: the General Secretary, based in HQ; the party's Administrator, who is based in Leinster House; and the Head of Communications, also based in Leinster House. The General Secretary has responsibility for staffing, finance and election planning. The interviews were then transcribed.

Key themes arose throughout the interview process which will be analysed under the following objectives:

- To identify what elements attract talent to a Political Party,

- To investigate the main challenges a Political Party experiences in today's 'War for Talent',

- To explore the appropriateness of a talent management model within a Political Party.

The questions that were asked of the interviewees are available in the appendix 1. The interviewees' anonymity is maintained throughout the findings as they are referred to as numerically e.g. Interviewee 1 = the first interviewee.

4.2 Analysis of Results

4.2.1 Research Objective 1: To identify what elements attract talent to a Political Party.

The interviewees were asked what they believed was the main attraction for talent (staff) in working for a political party. The interviewees all had quite similar responses to this research objective. As the interviews were semi-structured, this allowed the researcher more flexibility in the order in which the questions were asked. The following themes arose throughout the interviews; passion for politics, power and progression.

• **Passion for Politics**

Passion for politics was a theme that was present from the majority of the interviews. Interviewee 1 noticed that from an independent HR point of view, that passion was a strong factor in the attraction of applicants who have come forward stating *"they are passionate about the party's political goals and objectives"*. They had never experienced this passion from other HR advisory roles which they had conducted. Interviewee 3 had a slightly different angle of interpretation towards passion, seeing passion in terms of the large number of individuals volunteering and offering to come and help out in the organisation stating that *"I'm always surprised at the number of people volunteering and working regionally for the organisation, now that shows how individuals can be so passionate about the political party"*. Interviewee 4 believed that *"if you are not into current affairs or politics there is no way that you would come and work here"*. This statement also coincides with this theme determining that passion for politics is also a mind-set that the individuals must obtain in order to be successful in a role in this area. Interviewee 5 found that from the experience of her staff who are not employed by the political party but they are employed by the T.D.s and Senators *"if they are interested they will stay, if not they will move on"*.

This shows the complexity of the political party. Also in relation to this theme that was continuously emphasised by the majority of the interviewees was that the dynamic of a political party is very different to the dynamic of a private company. The back office support employees of a political party are there to assist and advise the elected members with the objective of the ultimate re-election of those members. Interviewee 4 further commented adding that *"that's what makes it fascinating as well as intriguing; it's just so completely different"*.

• **Power**

A theme that arose throughout the interviews was power. Both interviewees 2 and 5 believed that a lot of talent is attracted to a political party because *"they believe that it is a bit like the West Wing"*. Interviewee 5 expands on this statement, maintaining that they have to be upfront in interview boards and inform the applicants *"it is not the West Wing that you are coming to"*. Interviewee 2 also believed that the *"access to power and the buzz that it gives to say that they work for a government minister or that they are working in Leinster House"* is another key element of this attraction. As the employees of this particular party also provide advisory roles to the party members and to the public representatives, this expands on the theme of power but from a different angle. The employees cannot tell the member what is right or wrong but they can lead them to make the right decision. Two out of five of the interviewees felt that power was displayed through the hands of the employee in this situation through their advisory roles.

• **Progression**

Another theme which arose in terms of attraction was that of progression. Three out of five interviewees believe that progression is an element of the attraction which is relevant to the party. Interviewee 2 referred to progression in terms of their employees who are situated in the press office within HQ but they *"hope that if we're in power when ministers are*

appointed, that they would be employed as an advisor or press person". The majority of the present press and political advisors to the Ministers have come through this structure at HQ. The party offer opportunities for their current talent by advertising internally if a role becomes available.

4.2.2 Research Objective 2: To investigate the main challenges the political party experiences in today's 'War for Talent'.

The interviewees were asked a number of questions in relation to this research objective. Due to the nature of semi-structured interviews, other questions were probed in order for the interviewees to expand on their answers. The interviewees were asked to identify what they have witnessed as the main challenges that the political party face in terms of the recruitment of talent. The following themes arose as a result of this investigation: unsociable working hours, the complexity of the Political Party and the availability of talent.

• **Unsociable working hours**

The majority of the interviewees discussed unsociable working hours as a major challenge that the party experience. This theme has caused quite a lot of challenges for the political party in terms of attraction and recruitment in recent times. The administration and communications department in Leinster House have also experienced quite a high turnover rate in the past year. Four out of five interviewees identified unsociable working hours as a major challenge in the area of recruitment and retention. Interviewee 4 gave the description *"the hours are horrendous"* when addressing the question of challenges. She further added to this establishing *"this would limit the quality of talent that we would actually want"*. The challenge that interviewee 5 found is that "in the last year we have had a huge turnover of staff" and she believed that this is due to the role *"not being very family orientated"*. In the area of HQ, unsociable hours are also prevalent as interviewee 2 emphasised *"politicians do not work nine to five so we expect*

staff to be available most times and at the weekends" also the regional staff employed by HQ are expected as a part of their role *"to work three to four evenings a week"*. Finally, the perspective of the independent HR consultant who assists HQ in their HR practices implied that when interviewing the candidates that it is essential that they are made aware of the fact that *"it is a twenty four hour operation seven days a week"* so they won't go in to work thinking that it is a nine-to-five job. As a result of this, the unsociable working hours have been proved to create difficulties for the Party in recruitment of the particular talent that possess the skills, passion and motivation required for their roles. This is evident at the moment, as the party are currently recruiting for a regional organiser. On the day of the interview with the second HR consultant (Interviewee 3), the researcher was told that only twenty seven applications were received for this role and that was after the internal process of recruitment had proven unsuccessful, and the role having been advertised externally. The interviewee compared it to another private organisation that she provided an advisory role to receiving *"one hundred and sixty seven applications for a sales job which has the same job description as that of the regional organiser"*. The unsociable hours would play a vital role in the lack of applicants in this current 'War for Talent'.

• **Complex**

A theme that was quite repetitive throughout the interviewee's responses was that the organisation was quite a complex structure in how it operates both in Leinster House and HQ in relation to HR. Four out of five of the interviewees emphasised the complexity of the overall HR practices. The HR consultant (Interviewee 1) from her experience of advisory roles with private organisations stated *"I think that there is quite a difference in terms of HR, how they operate in HQ and how it operates over in Leinster House with the members, T.D.'s and Senators"*. The Administrator who is based in Leinster House (Interviewee 5) differentiated herself from the employees of HQ in the statement *"I'm contracted to the Party and I work for the party*

but I am paid by the Department of Finance". Another element of this theme which was emphasised by the communications officer (Interviewee 4) was that the recruitment process had to be advertised internally before going externally. This corresponds with the theme passion for politics because if you advertise internally you know that a member will already have the mind-set and be able to *"hit the ground running and continue to provide a service to the ninety odd people at constituency level"* (Interviewee 4). The General Secretary of the party differentiated the structure and indicated that *"All of our members of parliament, the Dáil and the Seanad are like franchisees in that they employ the staff themselves, we can only advise them"*. The party has no say or part to play in who works for the elected public representatives. This confirms the complexity of the political party as a whole; the differentiation of the party's HQ, their members of Leinster House and their employees who work for the party in Leinster House.

• **Available talent**

In response to this theme all five interviewees believe that there is a scarcity of talent. This theme was evident in all of the areas of recruitment within the political party. Interviewee 2 outlined that *"there's no scarcity of people well qualified but there is a scarcity of people who have work experience"*. This is a challenge that the party have experienced as of late. This is referring to the above theme of unsociable working hours, where the challenge of recruitment for the role of regional officer was mentioned. The party are in competition to attract talent with the appropriate skills and motivation required for this line of work. They are limited in the salaries that they can offer; this is a challenge as it can be very hard to compete with large multinationals and their salaries. Three out of five interviewees referred to the salaries and pay scale as a limitation in the recruitment of talent. The talent of today know that there is a 'War for Talent' and know that they can earn a higher salary elsewhere. Interviewee 5 related this element of scarcity to that of the high turnover that her department

experienced. The applicants start in the role under the impression that they will have access to power and that they see it as *"a cool place to work"* (Interviewee 2), but the reality is that they could be in work until half ten at night *"it's a hard slog, it's work it has it's nice days and not so nice days"* (Interviewee 5). Turnover of staff has surfaced as a challenge for the organisation mainly in the Leinster House section. Two out of five interviewees have commented on this element of turnover.

4.2.3 Research Objective 3: To explore the appropriateness of a talent management model within a political party.

The interviewees when asked about the area of talent management three out of five were unaware of the definition. It is evident that the political party did not implement a talent management model in relation to their practice of human resource management. When interviewee 3 was asked about the presence of talent management, she said *"we don't do that in a structured fashion, we don't consciously do it"*. However, she believed that there were certain aspects of the approach already present within the HR practice. They discussed what they maintained were elements already being implemented. The researcher has grouped these into the following themes in order to analyse and discuss the findings: identification of talent, integration and retention.

• **Identification of Talent**

In relation to the research objective above, the interviewees were asked by the researcher to clarify how they would identify talent through their recruitment processes. The HR consultant emphasised that when identifying talent *"you are looking for genuine people who show an interest in the party and can demonstrate their community involvement over the years"* (Interviewee 1). This is one factor that a political party considers as an appropriate characteristic in the identification of talent. Interviewee 2 referred to the talent that are already present within the HQ when addressing

this question. He explained that in terms of their employees they try to identify their training needs and assist them in developing their skills. He emphasised that they identify their talent as individuals who are *"self-starters"*. Interviewee 3 expanded further on this area indicating that they have provided further training and development for individuals that they believed have the potential to take on other tasks as well as their own. The identification of talent tends to come automatically in HQ. Interviewee 3 stated that this is not applied in a structured way. In the area of Leinster House the needs and wants of the potential talent differ, so there is no structured identification of talent. Interviewee 5 is only present in the Dáil to advise the elected members of best practice and HR advice as their employees are not contracted to the party.

• **Integration**

What came across from the interviews was that there is a big divide between HQ and Leinster House. This was addressed by two of the five interviewees. They said that there is a huge divide between HQ and their offices in Leinster House. They felt that the implementation of a formalised structure of HR similar to that of talent management would assist in bridging the gap between them. This element was contradicted by one of the two interviewees, interviewee 5; they said *"it will always remain separate"*. This statement was in relation to the employees of the TDs and Senators. They will remain separate from the party because the TDs and Senators are the employers and not the party as stated in chapter 1.

• **Retention**

This theme was evident from a number of the interviewees in relation to talent management. In order to retain the skilled talent who displayed great passion and motivation towards their role, management would identify those individuals and suggest swapping roles. Interviewee 3 referred to an example of this when the General Secretary of the party suggested

swapping the roles of two members of staff, the manager was due to retire in the next year *"the manager was the subordinate and subordinate became the manager"*. This strategic move proved to be successful for the organisation. This was referred to by two of the five interviewees as being an element of talent management. Identification of internal talent will result in retention, therefore turnover will remain low. Two out of five interviewees said that turnover was high but many of the individuals still remained in different roles within the political party *"talent within the press and research office in Leinster House and the HQ move to advisory roles with the minister's office"* (Interviewee 5).

• **The Structure of HR**

The majority of interviewees commented on the structure of HR currently being practiced. One interviewee commented *"they should be more disciplined; they should be putting more structure on it"* (Interviewee 4). The structure is also related to the area of integration which was mentioned earlier. This is regarding the big divide; the interviewees believed that the lack of a formal structure added to the divide of the offices. If it was the HR department in a private company they would have bridged that divide. The party do not practice a formalised talent management structure *"they value the talent that they have and they do try to retain and try and provide opportunities of development and progression if they become available"* (Interviewee 1). The theme of progression has emerged continuously throughout the interviews. The theme was identified earlier in the findings and analysis. Interviewee 4 linked the challenges of recruitment that her department experienced when they had to extend to an external means of advertisement; it is a challenge to find the talent with the right experience, background and mind set required for politics or the environment of working for a political party particularly in the research area.

4.3 Discussion

This section will discuss the findings of analysis and link the themes which arose to the literature reviewed in chapter 2. These will be discussed in sections related to the research objectives.

4.3.1 Research Objective 1: To identify what elements attract talent to a Political Party.

• **Passion**

It is evident from the above analysis that passion is a theme which goes hand-in-hand with the attraction of talent. This theme can be presented as an attribute of employer branding. Wilden, Gudergan and Lings (2010) maintain that employer branding is a situation where employees are aligned to the same values and beliefs of the organisation. Employer branding can be an effective HR strategy in winning the battle to attract and retain passionate, motivated and loyal employees (Robak, 2007; Bjorkman et al., 2013). Overall, passion is an element of the attraction of talent as potential talent shares the values and passion for politics with the Political Party.

• **Power**

Power in terms of the above findings and analysis can be categorized as an element of the employee value proposition from the employee perspective. Nalbantian and Jeffay (2011, p. 459) define the employee value proposition as *"what is expected of employees and what they can expect to derive from employment with that organization"*. This is of relevance to this theme as power is what attracted talent expect to achieve on becoming an employee of this political party. One out of five interviewees commented on both passion and power being an element of attraction for potential talent. This observation contrasts with Reilly and Williams (2011) who stated that employer brand has a close relationship with employee value proposition.

- **Progression**

The majority of the interviewees believed that the opportunity of progression added to the competitive advantage of the overall party. They are retaining the talent which they have assisted in further development of skills, offering training and opportunities of progression. The opportunity of development and progression can be related to the phrase the 'War for Talent'. This is where the organisation adapts in times of uncertainty when attracting talent (Chambers et al., 1998). It is an incentive for the talent to remain within the organisation, as positions are advertised internally, talent can feel valued by their senior management. The opportunity of progression has proved to be one of the main themes of attraction from the analysis of the findings as the employees see that their predecessors have advanced to advisory roles with government ministers.

4.3.2 Research Objective 2: To investigate the main challenges the political party experience in todays 'War for Talent'.

- **Unsociable working hours**

This theme is quite a challenge for the political party as the researcher found from the analysis of the findings. When interviewees were asked what they perceived to be the main challenges in relation to attraction the majority identified the unsociable working hours. From the interviewees it is evident that this factor is a part of the job description. The potential talent are informed of the unsociable side of the roles. If the potential talent do not accept the unsociable hours the party will recruit talent who will. Potential or existing talent will favour passion and loyalty of the party over anything else. This tends to be the mind-set of these individuals. These are the talent that this party tend to favour. In order for the party to overcome this challenge Michaels et al., (2001), second imperative, employee value proposition would provide assistance as it would involve the talent being made aware of the values of the party. If the talent accept the position they

are favouring the values of the party and employer brand rather than thinking of the negative of the unsociable hours. Interest, passion and employer brand overlap this negative.

• **Complex**

The complexity of the political party can be discussed in relation to Michaels et al., (2001, p. 11) framework the *"five imperatives of talent management"*. The implementation of these imperatives by an organisation is mainly focused at the managerial level and using their available talent in order to give competitive advantage. This theme is related to that of the fifth imperative, individualise your people as it is referred to by the researcher in chapter 2. This imperative entails that organisations are concentrating on their employed talent. The internal recruitment approach that is implemented by this political party is one example of this. The internal advertising and recruitment for talent shows that the organisation values their current talent, offering them incentives such as progression and development. The implementation of this imperative could assist the party to overcome the challenge of the element of complexity and appeal to external talent as the party value their talent. This in turn will result in retention, as they want to retain their talent who understand the complex structure of the party. Retention after all is the key result in order for this party to prevail and win in this 'War for Talent' (Oehley and Theron, 2010). The researcher has found that the themes of employer brand and passion are the factors that will overlap this challenge in terms of external recruitment in the future. As mentioned previously in chapter 2, the external attraction greatly depends on potential talent's perception of the organisation and whether they share their values (Tansley et al, 2007).

- **Available talent**

This theme had quite a few different challenges as a result of the findings. Retention was a factor which two out of five interviewees have experienced in their sectors. They have experienced quite a high turnover rate as of late. The talent that they required needed experience. The researcher believes that if the party implements the third imperative from Michaels et al, (2001, p. 11) framework, *"rebuild your recruitment strategy"* this would involve the party providing opportunities of progression and development as incentives over the limited salary that is on offer. The party could also implement the fourth imperative to address this challenge this would involve weaving *"development into your organisation"*. This incentive provides potential and existing talent the commitment of the party and this is a critical factor in the area of attraction and retention (Blass, 2009; Clarke, 2001; Michaels et al., 2001). The implementation of development opportunities as an incentive will overcome the high turnover that they are experiencing at the moment and will assist in overcoming the disadvantage of the salary and pay scale. Development has said to be as equally as important to employees and employers as salaries, therefore this will result in retention and it will be an investment for the future (Cook, 2008; Garavan et al., 1995). The implementation of both of these imperatives will assist the party to overcome the challenge of the availability of talent in order to progress in the 'War for Talent'.

4.3.3 Research Objective 3: To explore the appropriateness of a talent management model within a Political Party.

- **Identification of talent**

Talent management is the identification of the need for talent within the organisation (Cappelli, 2008). This identification is related to how the party identifies their talent. With the identification of their talent they can further develop them which would be a part of the process of a talent management model. From analysis of the findings the party does display this element of talent management. It is evident in that they identify the existing talent and provide opportunities for development and progression, but they also identify that they need talent, as one interviewee maintains that they are looking for experienced talent (Interview 2). The importance of identifying the skills and talent available has proven to be the differentiator in relation to competitive advantage. The positions where there is a scarcity of talent deserve special attention when it comes to talent management (Lawlor, 2008). The Sloan et al., (2003) model presents five steps to consider when implementing a talent management system. In the second step it indicates that the organisation must *"identify the gaps in the talent pipeline"* this would involve assessing performance of existing talent, the majority of interviewees referred to this element of identification. It is evident from the interviews that this is practised within the party. Potential talent is vital for any organisation and the identification of these individuals is essential in assisting the overall competitive advantage (Brown and Hesketh, 2004).

- **Integration**

An integrated talent management model can assist the HR practice (Fleenor, Taylor and Chappelow, 2011). This can assist the political party in reducing the divide between Leinster House and HQ. It complements the factor of employer branding and employee value proposition. The values and image of the employer brand play a vital role in attracting potential talent (Kim,

2008). If the employer brand also shows that the entire workforce are integrated this will complement the theme of attraction. In relation to employee value proposition, this is what the employer has to offer their potential talent (Reilly and Williams, 2011; Armstrong 2009). In terms of integration and talent management this would display a united workforce all working towards the same organisational goal.

• **Retention**

The theme of retention is closely related to the theme of progression which was mentioned earlier in this chapter. Bjorkman et al., (2013) maintains that retention of talent is due to how the organisation identifies with their employees and how they enhance their self-motivation and self-esteem. This further complements the idea of role-swapping as mentioned by Interviewee 3, where the talent was self-motivated by the opportunity of progression and development into a senior role. In relation to talent management this displayed the characteristics of *"identification, development, retention and deployment of those individuals who are of a particular value to an organisation"* (CIPD, 2014).

• **Structure of HR**

The implementation of a talent management system as a tool can be created by the organisation to realise a specific outcome (Oehley and Theron, 2010). In relation to this area the outcome would be a structured approach to HR. The development of a talent management system to address the main challenges of recruitment and attraction of potential talent and retention can be the intended outcome. If a process was developed and implemented successfully it can be an essential part of the overall strategy of the organisation (Kim et al., 2014). It was noted during the interviews that the political party practice all of the components of talent management as defined by Rothwell (2011, p. 120), as *"the process of attracting, developing, retaining and deploying the best people"*. The researcher on

analysis of the findings found that all of these characteristics are practiced as a part of the informal HR structure. This relates to the earlier comment by Interviewee 3 that they practice an informal system. It was evident to the researcher on analysis of the findings that the majority of interviewees were unaware that they were already practicing it in an informal manner.

4.2 Conclusion

It is evident that the political party have experienced numerous challenges in the area of recruitment. The interviewees believed that a more structured process of HR practice will assist in bridging the divide between the two departments. There is evidence that the party practice elements of a talent management process but not in a formalised manner.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this dissertation was to explore the challenges associated with the recruitment of talent for a Political Party. This chapter will present the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of the overall research.

Research Objectives:

- To identify what elements attract talent to a Political Party,

- To investigate the main challenges a Political Party experiences in today's 'War for Talent',

- To explore the appropriateness of a talent management model within a Political Party.

5.2 Conclusion

Through the analysis and discussion of the findings, the following themes were identified under the first objective: Passion, Power and Progression. These are all related to the area of attraction. The research presented that employer branding and employee value proposition are the key elements of attraction. Potential talent are attracted by this element as they are politically aligned to the same values and beliefs as the party. The perception of the power inherent in the role is also an element, as the opportunity to work for a party that is either in government or in opposition is more attractive to potential talent. The opportunity of progression is a competitive advantage as talent feel valued by the party and they want to progress, and as a result they retain their developed and skilled individuals. The key finding of the researcher in relation to these elements is that attraction is mainly based on the mind-set of the individuals.

The researcher identified three themes from the analysis and discussion of the findings under the second objective: unsociable working hours, complex structures of a political party and the availability of talent. These themes were identified as the main challenges the political party experience in the 'War for Talent'. The challenge of the unsociable hours and the complexity of working for the party cannot be addressed as these are inherent elements in how the organisation operates.

In terms of initial attraction and recruitment, the salary on offer is a limitation on the availability of talent. Salaries and pay scales are a limitation in terms of attraction and recruitment. Potential talent could overlook the opportunity of a role within the party if they see a higher salary in another organisation as more attractive. In relation to these challenges, the party needs to attract potential talent who present the mind-set that would overlook these factors.

In relation to talent management, the researcher found that the party do not implement a unified cohesive model. The HR structure is informal, however, the organisation does utilise individual elements of a model. The elements of attraction, development, retention and deployment are all practiced within the organisation but not in a formal structure. One example is the theme of the identification of talent whereby they do practice the principles of talent management. The researcher has assessed that the challenges which should be addressed to improve the organisation's performance using the formalised talent management model would be those of integration and retention. The organisation does experience a high turnover rate, as outlined by the interviewees, and this is a factor which has been prioritised for improvement.

5.3 Recommendations

The researcher recommends that the party construct their own talent management model. With the implementation of a formal talent management model, this will assist the organisation in defeating the challenges in today's 'War for Talent'.

The interviewees mentioned numerous challenges which they have experienced in the recruitment process. The following are the recommendations which the researcher has made to address these challenges through the application of a talent management model.

In order for talent management to be successful, it must be recognised and implemented across the entire workforce, from the senior management across all of the departments (McCauley and Wakefield, 2006). The awareness of the interviewees of the divide between the central office and the party offices in Leinster House and the related variation of HR policies are an indication for the requirement of a more integrated HR structure. With the implementation of an appropriate talent management model, this challenge could be addressed. This structure would also provide guidance in the identification of talent. As there is a scarcity of talent, this involves identifying potential talent already present and developing them. In the literature review, the Human Capital Pipeline was detailed. This model was developed by Romans and Lardner (2005) in order to integrate the entire workforce with a result of all of the departments being interlinked.

The implementation of a formalised model of talent management will assist the party in the integration of all departments. With the combination of elements from Michaels et al., (2001) article, *"Five Imperatives for Talent Management"* and an adaptation of the human capital pipeline, the party can then proceed to the creation of an appropriate model. The researcher recommends adopting a specific model, beginning with the concept of 'hire to retire' in relation to the human capital pipeline model, and in tandem with a combination of the elements: talent mind-set, employee value proposition/employer brand, recruitment strategy and talent development.

5.3.1 Talent mind-set

The adoption of a talent mind-set across the party will assist the individual and collective workforce through integration. This will unite both offices, as they will be involved in maintaining the one talent management system. The unified system will allow HR to identify individuals in one part of the organisation who may fit gaps in the other part of the organisation. This mind-set should be applied from the first day of recruitment. The workforce will then know senior management understands their potential and values their talent, leading them to opportunities for development and progression, and thereby reducing turnover rates.

Suggested Recommendations:

- Management spotting potential talent through voluntary members of the party, the youth wing of the party and student politics, interns places with Oireachtas members or HQ,

- Engage with existing talent, show that their input is recognised through a feedback form every six months on their ideas for their career or the organisation, to be discussed with the line manager at appraisal,

- HR and management show that they are willing to take risks on new potential talent by offering them higher roles or extra responsibility e.g. helping out during election time,

- Show that they are valued by the organisation,

- Reward talent for working towards the Party's goals and objectives e.g. through bonuses/events/thank you letter from the Taoiseach.

5.3.2 Employee value proposition/Employer brand

The perception of power and the opportunity of progression are what the employees expect to receive from employment. The employees share the same political values as the party and this is noted from the employer brand of the political party. To improve this area the party need to re brand their organisation, advertise their goals and values in order to appeal to the potential talent that they require. The organisation require this individuals to achieve their goals and objectives. This element would complement phase five of the human capital pipeline, 'reward/retain/motivate'.

Suggested Recommendations:

- Embedding an ethos of development and progression,

- 'Email the Leader', every staff member has the opportunity to email the Leader of the party with suggestions and questions, then once every two weeks the leader selects one employee to reply to,

- Outline the importance of the specific role to the whole organisation from the recruitment stage, including the internal or external advert for the role, and in announcements of new staff or new role.

5.3.3 Recruitment Strategy

The recruitment strategy can only be as efficient as the organisation makes it. The party should rethink and rebuild their recruitment strategy with the above elements in mind. To improve the outcomes, the attraction of talented individuals with the shared values of the organisation is what the organisation should concentrate upon. These factors would complement phase one and two of the human capital pipeline, 'business analysis/profile development and identification/attraction'.

Suggested Recommendations:

- Spotting potential talent to fill a role from within the organisation or within related networks,

- Job description to include a paragraph on why the political party is a good place for work- show the potential talent that they are valued from day one,

- Internal methods of progression, where HR policy is altered to include the idea of approaching appropriate candidates for vacancies.

5.3.4 Talent Development

As it was found that there are opportunities of development already present, a more formalised approach would assist the organisation in the area of retention. The opportunity of further development and progression will be an incentive for talent who remain with the organisation. These factors would complement phase four, five and six of the human capital pipeline, 'assess/coach/develop, reward/retain/motivate and promote/transition'.

Suggested Recommendations:

- Implement a structured process for talent,

- Improved induction process,

- Coaches/mentors assigned to talent for their first six months with the organisation, or for their first six months in a new role,

- Performance appraisal, including individual training assessments,

- Individualised development plans,

- Networking Session with Politicians – Open Forum with Ministers structured to discuss campaign ideas, policy ideas or related matters to ensure that talent feel their insight is important to senior politicians and do their party as a whole.

The application of a formalised talent management model will assist the party in addressing not only the challenges which are experienced in relation to the 'War for Talent' but it will also address and integrate all offices within the party.

The single most important element that will win these challenges is the mind-set of the potential talent. The challenge of unsociable hours will be overlooked by the talent with the required political mind-set – having the opportunity to work for an organisation that shares the talent's values and where the talent plays a role in helping the overall organisation advance.

Finding talent with this mind-set has proven difficult and therefore that is a challenge, to assist the talent to overlook the unsociable hours by emphasising the employer brand and shared values.

5.4 Limitations of Research

As previously outlined in chapter 3, this research is only based on one political party. There was no evidence of previous research in this area. As this dissertation was conducted during an academic year the findings were limited due to time constraints. The findings of this research are only based on the findings of senior employees and two human resource consultants. If the research was conducted on a larger sample using quantitative methods the findings could have presented a broader result.

5.5 Considerations for Future Research

The complexity of employment within the party is very difficult to comprehend. The researcher suggests that an investigation into the overall employment practices of the political party should be conducted. This is in relation to the contracts within the party. During the interviews it was mentioned that some employees are contracted by the party and work for the party but paid by the Department of Finance. Numerous employees are contracted from election to election. The differences of these employment practices should be distinguished in order to better understand these practices. The employees of the TDs and Senators are another element which should be researcher in the future. An exploration of the talent management processes used by TDs and Senators in the employment of their parliamentary assistants and secretarial assistants should be researched. The benefits of stream lining the employment-contractual model used by the party should be explored.

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Appendix 1: Interview

Interview for Dissertation

Name:

Position at organisation:

Date:

Introduction:

The overall aim of this research dissertation is to explore the challenges associated with the recruitment of talent for a political party. The information that you give in the study will be handled confidentially. The recording and transcript from this interview will only be available for the use by the National College of Ireland and for the purpose of this research. They will not be available to a third party. You have the opportunity to withdraw from this interview at any stage.

Questions:

1. Could you give me a brief outline of your own background in HR and your background with this organisation?

2. What are the HR practices that this organisation undertakes?

3. Does this organisation have a recruitment strategy?

4. What do you believe attracts people to this organisation?

5. How do you identify talent?

6. What are the main challenges facing the organisation when trying to attract the right talent?

7. Have you found that there is a scarcity of talent?

8. Are there opportunities for further training and development?

9.   Do you believe that the term 'War for Talent' is still appropriate to describe the challenge of recruitment?

10.   What is your understanding of the term Talent Management?

11.   Are there any elements of talent management that already exist within this organisation?

12.   Do you feel that TM is something that this organisation should consider introducing?