

# Analysis of Academic Perception of Talent Management Practices in Higher Educational Institutions

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.12110112>

Received: 20 September 2025; Accepted: 26 September 2025; Published: 18 December 2025

## ABSTRACT

This study examined academics' perceptions of talent management practices across higher educational institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. Guided by the objective of comparing perceptions in a federal university, a state polytechnic, and a state college of education, the study focused on four talent management dimensions: acquisition, development, retention, and succession planning. The population for the doctoral thesis from which this article is derived comprised 2,749 staff, with a Krejcie and Morgan formula sample of 349. For the present paper, a purposive subsample of 95 academics was drawn (Federal University 46; State Polytechnic, 31; State College of Education, 18). Data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising Section A (biodata) and Section B (items structured on a 5-point Likert scale). Content validity was ensured through expert review in Human Resource Management and prior studies, while reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, with all four constructs surpassing the 0.70 threshold. Descriptive statistics (percentages, means, and standard deviations) were applied, while inferential analysis was conducted using one-way ANOVA at a 5% level of significance. Where significant differences occurred, Tukey post-hoc tests were performed. Findings revealed notable differences across institutions: the federal university reported stronger acquisition and retention practices, the state college of education excelled in succession planning, while the polytechnic lagged across most dimensions. Talent development showed no significant variation. The study concludes that institutional type and ownership shape talent management practices, recommends tailored improvements across institutions, and contributes comparative evidence to human resource management research in Nigeria's higher education sector.

**Keywords:** Talent Management, Talent Acquisition, Talent Development, Talent Retention, Succession Planning, Higher Education

## INTRODUCTION

The management of academic talent has become a major concern in higher education worldwide, especially under conditions of resource constraints, rising enrolments, and global competition. Talent management practices, including acquisition, development, retention, and succession planning, are now seen as strategic HR interventions that determine universities', polytechnics', and colleges' ability to deliver effectively (Al-Ali et al., 2019; Vrontis et al., 2022). Since higher educational institutions are knowledge-intensive, their most important assets remain the skills and commitment of academic staff. Thus, exploring academics' perceptions of talent management practices offers insights into institutional performance and sustainability.

Nigeria's higher education sector is diverse, consisting of federal, state, and private institutions that differ in governance and funding. In Delta State, the federal university, state polytechnic, and state college of education play crucial but distinct roles in knowledge generation, vocational training, and teacher preparation. However, disparities in funding and structures shape academics' experiences: federal universities generally attract more qualified staff, while polytechnics and colleges of education often struggle with limited resources and career advancement opportunities.

Globally, evidence shows that strong talent management improves academic engagement and retention (Meyers et al., 2020; Khoreva & Vaiman, 2020). In Africa, however, succession planning and retention remain weak due to unstable funding and governance (Akinwale et al., 2021). Nigeria faces difficulties in attracting and retaining staff, limited development opportunities, and weak leadership pipelines (Oludayo et al., 2018). These realities make comparative investigations across institution types both timely and necessary.

While prior Nigerian studies have focused mainly on federal universities, little research compares perceptions across institution types. Yet, institutional diversity in Delta State suggests possible variations in academics' perceptions of talent management. If such differences exist, they have implications for academic staffing and HR policies. Moreover, while acquisition and development receive attention, retention and succession planning remain neglected, resulting in turnover, brain drain, and leadership gaps. A comparative approach is therefore essential to identify strengths and weaknesses and to guide tailored interventions.

### **This study is designed to:**

- 1 Examine academics' perception of talent management practices in the federal university.
- 2 Establish perceptions in the state polytechnic.
- 3 Determine perceptions in the state college of education.
- 4 Compare perceptions across the three institution types.

These objectives align with calls for nuanced investigations into HR practices in diverse higher education contexts (Thunnissen, 2017; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020).

The study's significance is both theoretical and practical. It contributes to HRM literature in higher education by showing how structural and policy environments shape talent management. Practically, it offers policymakers and administrators evidence to improve strategies for attraction, development, retention, and succession, thereby strengthening institutional performance and sustainability amid global competition and domestic challenges.

The study focuses on academics in a federal university, a state polytechnic, and a state college of education in Delta State. It is limited to four talent management dimensions: acquisition, development, retention, and succession planning. Data were collected from academic staff, who are central to the teaching, research, and service roles of higher education.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

Talent management is a strategic approach to human resource management that involves identifying, attracting, developing, retaining, and positioning individuals with high potential to meet organizational goals (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020). In higher education institutions, academics are the critical human capital whose expertise directly influences teaching quality, research output, and institutional reputation. Talent management practices therefore serve as mechanisms to align academic capacity with institutional missions. While private-sector talent management emphasizes competitive advantage, in higher educational institutions the focus extends to sustainability, knowledge transfer, and service delivery (Meyers et al., 2020).

### **Talent Management in Higher Education Institutions**

Higher educational institutions face unique challenges in implementing talent management practices. First, their missions combine teaching, research, and community service, requiring multifaceted academic competencies. Second, they operate within regulated environments where government funding, policy, and governance structures heavily influence HR practices. Studies in Africa highlight that many higher educational institutions lack formalized talent management frameworks, leading to inconsistent recruitment, weak career development, and ad hoc succession practices (Maroga et al., 2024; Amushila & Shikalepo, 2021). Nigerian Higher educational institutions are particularly affected by underfunding, political interference, and poor HR planning, which constrain their ability to institutionalize talent management practices (Oludayo et al., 2018;).

## **Talent Acquisition in Higher Education**

Talent acquisition involves attracting and selecting qualified academics. Globally, effective acquisition practices include competitive recruitment packages, transparent criteria, and employer branding (Khoreva & Vaiman, 2020). In developed countries, universities employ global recruitment strategies to attract talent, whereas African Higher educational institutions face brain drain, funding limitations, and competition from foreign universities (Hoque et al., 2022). In Nigeria, federal universities often outperform state institutions in attracting talent due to relatively better remuneration, facilities, and prestige (Akinwale et al., 2021). Polytechnics and colleges of education face recruitment challenges, partly because of their vocational and teacher-training focus, which is less attractive to high-profile academics. Perceptions of weak acquisition practices can discourage applications and reinforce disparities between federal and state institutions.

## **Talent Development in Higher Education**

Talent development refers to enhancing staff capacity through training, mentoring, research support, and continuous professional development (CPD). Globally, faculty development is linked to higher student satisfaction, improved teaching, and increased research output (Fernandes, 2023; Vela, 2023). Effective TD strategies include workshops, sabbaticals, mentoring, and technology-driven learning platforms. In African Higher educational institutions, development opportunities are constrained by inadequate funding, poor institutional planning, and heavy teaching workloads (Amushila & Shikalepo, 2021). Nonetheless, scholars argue that where structured CPD exists, academics report stronger commitment and performance (Rashida et al., 2025). In Nigeria, professional development is more institutionalized in universities compared to polytechnics and colleges of education, which struggle with fewer resources and limited exposure to international collaborations.

## **Talent Retention in Higher Education**

Retention strategies aim to reduce turnover by ensuring academics remain motivated and committed. Key practices include career advancement opportunities, fair promotion criteria, supportive leadership, and adequate compensation. Globally, retention is a challenge in higher educational institutions because of competitive labour markets and attractive opportunities abroad (Meyers et al., 2020). African higher educational institutions often record high turnover intentions due to poor welfare systems, political instability, and inadequate research support. Nigerian academics face similar challenges, including irregular salaries, poor infrastructure, and limited promotion opportunities (Amushila & Shikalepo, 2021). Studies show that without effective retention strategies, higher educational institutions risk losing mid-career and high-performing academics, undermining institutional continuity (Ogun State Universities Study, 2024).

## **Succession Planning in Higher Education**

Succession planning (SP) prepares individuals to assume future leadership positions, ensuring continuity and stability. In corporate organisations, SP is well developed, but in higher educational institutions it remains underemphasized (Maroga et al., 2024). Studies in African higher educational institutions reveal weak succession pipelines, with appointments often politicised or ad hoc (Ghanaian public universities review, 2022). In Nigeria, succession planning is rarely institutionalized; leadership roles are typically filled through external appointments or seniority rather than structured preparation (Oludayo et al., 2018). Consequently, academics often perceive SP as absent or ineffective. Where SP exists, it is limited to informal mentoring or administrative training in select universities. The lack of robust SP frameworks contributes to instability and leadership vacuums in state-owned institutions (Namibian public enterprises evidence, 2023).

## **Comparative Studies across Institution Types**

Comparative studies are limited but reveal structural differences. Federal universities often lead in acquisition and development, benefiting from higher funding and prestige (Hoque et al., 2022). State polytechnics are stronger in practical training but weaker in academic research and staff retention (Adamawa IHL evidence, 2020). Colleges of education show modest development and acquisition practices but often struggle with longterm retention and career advancement. Globally, system-level differences similarly shape talent

management practices implementation. For instance, in the US, research universities provide stronger acquisition and development systems, while community colleges focus on teaching with fewer resources (Khoreva & Vaiman, 2020). Comparable patterns exist in African contexts, where national universities outperform regional or technical colleges in talent management practices (Maroga et al., 2024).

### **Empirical Evidence Linking talent management practices and Employee Outcomes**

Studies consistently link effective talent management practices with positive academic outcomes:

- Talent Acquisition correlates with higher organizational commitment and academic engagement (Hoque et al., 2022). - Talent Development enhances teaching effectiveness and research productivity (Fernandes, 2023). Talent Retention reduces turnover intentions and improves morale (Amushila & Shikalepo, 2021). Succession Planning ensures leadership continuity and reduces uncertainty in governance (Maroga et al., 2024). In Nigeria, talent management practices are positively associated with employee performance dimensions (task, adaptive, and contextual) but weaknesses in retention and succession remain bottlenecks (Ogun State Universities Study, 2024).

**Gaps in the Literature** Three key gaps emerge:

- 1 Comparative focus: Few studies directly compare talent management practices across institution types in Nigeria.
- 2 Perceptual emphasis: Limited evidence exists on how academics themselves perceive talent management practices implementation, despite being central stakeholders.
- 3 Succession and retention: These dimensions remain underexplored and under-practiced, creating persistent leadership and continuity challenges.

This study addresses these gaps by conducting a comparative analysis of academics' perceptions across a federal university, a state polytechnic, and a state college of education in Delta State.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The design is appropriate because the research gathered opinions and perceptions of academics across different higher educational institutions on talent management practices. The population for the doctoral study from which this article is derived comprised 2,749 academic and senior non-teaching staff members across two universities, two polytechnics, a college of education, and two other allied tertiary institutions in Delta State. A total sample size of 349 was originally determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula for sample size determination, and this was proportionately distributed across institutions and staff categories. For the present article, the focus is limited to academics in order to examine their perceptions of talent management practices across higher educational institution types. Three institutions were purposively selected to reflect the comparative design (a university, a polytechnic, and a college of education), and the academic subsample sizes originally allocated during the doctoral study were retained: Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun (46 academics), Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku (31 academics), and College of Education, Mosogar (18 academics). The effective sample for this article therefore comprises 95 academic respondents. This approach maintains methodological consistency with the parent study and ensures representativeness, while the purposive selection of institutions is consistent with methodological guidance on aligning samples with specific research objectives (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Structured questionnaire was used to gather the primary data. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. Section A took care of the biodata of respondents; Section B covered four talent management practices constructs (talent attraction, talent development, talent retention, and succession planning). The items under the Section B constructs were developed with the Likert 5-point scale (strongly agree 5 to strongly disagree 1). Content validity was ensured through expert review and alignment with the research objectives as well as prior studies. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. All alpha values met the 0.70 minimum acceptable value (Talent attraction 0.80, Talent development 0.83, Talent retention 0.71, Succession planning 0.70). These values are reran values for this subset.

Data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 23). The analysis plan was structured according to the study objectives:

- 1 Objective 1: Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies) were used to examine academics' perception of talent management practices in the university.
- 2 Objective 2: Descriptive statistics were applied to establish academics' perception in the polytechnic.
- 3 Objective 3: Similarly, descriptive statistics were used to determine academics' perception in the college of education.

4. Objective 4: One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to compare the perceptions of academics across the three institution types. Where significant differences were detected, post-hoc tests (Tukey HSD) were conducted to identify the specific group differences. Level of significance 0.05 was adopted for all tests.

## Respondents' Biodata

**Table 1a: Federal University**

Sample size: N = 46.

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	19	41.3
Female	27	58.7
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	2	4.3
Married	43	93.5
Widowed	1	2.2
<b>Level of Education</b>		
Bachelor's Degree	3	6.5
Master's Degree	13	28.3
PhD	30	65.2
<b>Age bracket</b>		
31-40	16	34.8
41-50	18	39.1
51-60	12	26.1
<b>Length of Service</b>		
0–5 years	7	15.2
6–10 years	11	23.9
11–15 years	19	41.3
16–20 years	9	19.6

The sample comprised more females (58.7%) than males (41.3%), with most respondents married (93.5%). Educationally, the majority held PhDs (65.2%), followed by master's (28.3%) and bachelor's degrees (6.5%). The workforce was mainly middle-aged (31–50 years = 74%), and largely experienced, with 41.3% having 11–15 years of service. Overall, respondents were predominantly mature, highly educated, and experienced academics.

**Table 1b: State Polytechnic**

Sample size: N = 31.

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	17	54.8
Female	14	45.2
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	8	25.8
Married	22	71.0
Widowed	1	3.2
<b>Level of Education</b>		
HND	4	12.9
Bachelor's Degree	5	16.1
Master's Degree	10	32.3
PhD	5	16.1
Others(specify)	7	22.6
<b>Age bracket</b>		
21-30	3	9.7
31-40	9	29.0
41-50	5	16.1
51-60	12	38.7
Above 60	2	6.5
<b>Years in Service</b>		
0–5 years	6	19.4
6–10 years	7	22.6
11–15 years	8	25.8
16–20 years	8	25.8
Above 20 years	2	6.5

The demographic profile indicates a fairly balanced sample with slightly more males (54.8%) than females (45.2%). Most respondents are married (71.0%) and highly educated, with nearly half (48.4%) holding postgraduate qualifications. The workforce is largely middle-aged, with the highest proportion (38.7%) between 51 and 60 years, and shows considerable stability, as the majority (74.2%) have between 6 and 20 years of service. This reflects a mature, well-qualified, and experienced population, suitable for generating credible insights in the study.

**Table 1c: State College of Education**

Sample size: N = 18.

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	9	50.0
Female	9	50.0
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	2	11.1
Married	16	88.9
<b>Level of Education</b>		
Bachelor's Degree	3	16.7
Master's Degree	11	61.1
PhD	4	22.2
<b>Age bracket</b>		
21-30	1	5.6
31-40	5	27.8
41-50	11	61.1
51-60	1	5.6
<b>Years in service</b>		
0–5 years	10	55.6
11–15 years	1	5.6
16–20 years	3	16.7
Above 20 years	4	22.2

The respondents were evenly split by gender, predominantly married, and highly educated, with most holding master's or doctoral degrees. The majority were middle-aged (41–50 years), while many had less than five years in service, alongside a fair proportion of experienced staff. Overall, the sample reflects a balanced, qualified, and mature academic workforce.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Talent Management Practices**

Construct	Institution	N	Mean	SD
Talent Acquisition	Federal University	46	3.95	0.52
Talent Acquisition	State College of Education	18	3.62	0.87
Talent Acquisition	State Polytechnic	31	3.22	0.79
Talent Development	Federal University	46	3.84	0.87
Talent Development	State College of Education	18	3.97	0.72
Talent Development	State Polytechnic	31	3.61	0.79
Talent Retention	Federal University	46	3.65	0.81
Talent Retention	State College of Education	18	3.35	0.79
Talent Retention	State Polytechnic	31	3.15	0.76
Succession Planning	Federal University	46	2.93	0.89
Succession Planning	State College of Education	18	3.54	0.39
Succession Planning	State Polytechnic	31	3.06	0.80

Across institutions, Talent Development consistently showed the highest mean perceptions, while Succession Planning and Talent Retention tended to be lower. Federal University academics reported slightly higher overall scores compared to their counterparts in State Polytechnic and State College of Education.

**Table 3: Comparative Analysis (ANOVA)**

Construct	F	Df1	Df2	p-value	Eta Sq	N
Talent Acquisition	10.56	2	92	0.000	0.187	95
Talent Development	1.25	2	92	0.292	0.026	95
Talent Retention	3.72	2	92	0.028	0.075	95
Succession Planning	3.92	2	92	0.023	0.079	95

For Talent Acquisition, group means were: Federal University:  $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ; State College of Education:  $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ; State Polytechnic:  $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ . The ANOVA was significant,  $F(2, 92) = 10.56$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.187$ . This indicates statistically reliable differences in perceptions across institution types.

For Talent Development, group means were: Federal University:  $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ; State College of Education:  $M = 3.97$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ; State Polytechnic:  $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ . The ANOVA was not significant,  $F(2, 92) = 1.25$ ,  $p = 0.292$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.026$ , indicating broadly similar perceptions across institutions.

For Talent Retention, group means were: Federal University:  $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ; State College of Education:  $M = 3.35$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ; State Polytechnic:  $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ . The ANOVA was significant,  $F(2, 92) = 3.72$ ,  $p = 0.028$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.075$ . This indicates statistically reliable differences in perceptions across institution types.

For Succession Planning, group means were: Federal University:  $M = 2.93$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ; State College of

Education:  $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = 0.39$ ; State Polytechnic:  $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ . The ANOVA was significant,  $F(2, 92) = 3.92$ ,  $p = 0.023$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.079$ . This indicates statistically reliable differences in perceptions across institution types.

**TABLE 4: Post-Hoc Tukey Hsd**

The table below presents pairwise comparisons across the three institutions for each construct, using the academic sample (Federal University = 46, State Polytechnic = 31, State College of Education = 18; total  $N = 95$ ). Reported values include mean differences, 95% confidence intervals, p-values, and significance decisions.

Construct	Group 1	Group 2	Mean Diff	Lower CI	Upper CI	p-value	Significant?
Talent Acquisition	Federal University	State College of Education	-0.33	-0.78	0.13	0.208	No
Talent Acquisition	Federal University	State Polytechnic	-0.73	-1.11	-0.35	0.000	Yes
Talent Acquisition	State College of Education	State Polytechnic	-0.41	-0.89	0.08	0.118	No
Talent Development	Federal University	State College of Education	0.14	-0.41	0.68	0.823	No
Talent Development	Federal University	State Polytechnic	-0.22	-0.68	0.23	0.469	No
Talent Development	State College of Education	State Polytechnic	-0.36	-0.94	0.22	0.304	No
Talent Retention	Federal University	State College of Education	-0.30	-0.82	0.22	0.365	No
Talent Retention	Federal University	State Polytechnic	-0.49	-0.93	-0.06	0.023	Yes
Talent Retention	State College of Education	State Polytechnic	-0.19	-0.75	0.36	0.687	No
Succession Planning	Federal University	State College of Education	0.61	0.09	1.13	0.017	Yes

Succession	Federal	State	0.14	-0.30	0.57	0.742	No
Construct	Group 1	Group 2	Mean Diff	Lower CI	Upper CI	p-value	Significant?
Planning	University	Polytechnic					
Succession Planning	State College of Education	State Polytechnic	-0.48	-1.03	0.08	0.108	No

For Talent Acquisition, Tukey's post-hoc tests revealed significant differences: Federal University vs State Polytechnic (mean diff = -0.73,  $p = 0.000$ ). This indicates that perceptions of this practice differ reliably between these institutions.

For Talent Development, no significant pairwise differences were detected. This suggests that, although overall means may vary slightly, the differences are not statistically reliable.

For Talent Retention, Tukey's post-hoc tests revealed significant differences: Federal University vs State Polytechnic (mean diff = -0.49,  $p = 0.023$ ). This indicates that perceptions of this practice differ reliably between these institutions.

For Succession Planning, Tukey's post-hoc tests revealed significant differences: Federal University vs State College of Education (mean diff = 0.61,  $p = 0.017$ ). This indicates that perceptions of this practice differ reliably between these institutions.

In summary, Federal Universities consistently emerged as the institution type with higher mean scores in significant comparisons, especially in Talent Acquisition. State Polytechnics and Colleges of Education generally reported lower or comparable perceptions, highlighting disparities between federal and state-owned institutions in how talent management practices are experienced.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study provide insights into academics' perceptions of talent management practices across three categories of higher educational institutions (Federal University, State Polytechnic, and State College of Education) in Delta State. Four constructs of talent management were considered: talent acquisition, talent development, talent retention, and succession planning. The comparative results reveal both commonalities and disparities that align with patterns identified in prior scholarship on higher education management.

The results indicate significant differences in perceptions of talent acquisition across institutions, with Federal University respondents reporting the highest mean scores ( $M = 3.95$ ), while State Polytechnic respondents recorded the lowest ( $M = 3.22$ ). Tukey's post-hoc test confirmed that Federal University staff perceived their institution as significantly better in talent acquisition compared to the Polytechnic. This suggests that federal institutions may be more effective in attracting qualified academics, possibly due to better funding structures and reputation advantages (Adeleye et al., 2019). Prior studies similarly demonstrate that universities with stronger financial backing and broader recognition tend to attract higher-caliber staff and provide more competitive recruitment processes (Nguyen et al., 2020).

Perceptions of talent development were generally high across all institutions, with mean scores ranging from 3.61 to 3.97. Importantly, no significant differences were found between institutions, indicating a broadly similar approach to professional growth opportunities. This finding suggests that despite disparities in institutional ownership, academics generally perceive that opportunities for training, research support, and career advancement are fairly available. This outcome resonates with findings by Mensah and Bawole (2021), who

argued that professional development practices in African higher institutions are increasingly being standardized due to national accreditation requirements and global academic expectations.

In terms of retention, differences emerged, with Federal University academics reporting more favorable perceptions ( $M = 3.65$ ) compared to their Polytechnic counterparts ( $M = 3.15$ ). Tukey's analysis confirmed significant variation between the Federal University and State Polytechnic. This suggests that retention policies in federal institutions, such as better pay structures, clearer promotion pathways, and improved research support, may contribute to higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions. Empirical evidence supports this interpretation, as recent studies emphasize that competitive compensation and supportive organizational culture are critical to retaining academic staff in resource-constrained environments (Obisi & Uchenwamgbe, 2022; Oladapo, 2021).

Succession planning revealed statistically significant differences, with the State College of Education recording the highest perception ( $M = 3.54$ ) compared to the Federal University ( $M = 2.93$ ). The post-hoc test highlighted that staff in Colleges of Education perceive succession arrangements more favorably than their federal university counterparts. This is an intriguing finding, suggesting that while federal institutions perform better in recruitment and retention, state colleges may have clearer or more accessible pathways for leadership continuity and role replacement. This aligns with findings by Getha-Taylor et al. (2022), who note that smaller institutions often prioritize succession planning to ensure operational continuity despite limited resources, unlike larger universities where bureaucratic structures can hinder such efforts. However, it should be noted that small samples have limitations, thus generalization should be done cautiously. We suggest that future researchers use larger sample size as well as randomly selected samples to validate our findings.

Overall, the study demonstrates that Federal University consistently emerge as stronger in talent acquisition and retention, likely reflecting their superior resource base. However, State College of Education appear to excel in succession planning, which may reflect their institutional culture of mentorship and internal promotion. Another possibility could be that their governance structure differs from that of the federal university. Again, it could be that succession planning is more routine and visible compared to the federal university. The age of the institution might be an important factor, as the College of Education is far older in establishment than the Federal University. However, these becomes possible research areas for future researchers to clarify.

On the other hand, Polytechnic generally lag behind in most dimensions, highlighting systemic challenges in talent management within this category. These disparities are consistent with recent findings that institutional type and ownership significantly influence human resource practices in higher education (Otoo & Mishra, 2018; Yahaya & Ojo, 2022).

It is also possible that demographic variables like level of education, length of service or even age may influence the perceptions. Again, those variables were not factored into the scope of this study, thus this study did not explore them. We suggest them for future researches to expand on

The findings underscore the need for policymakers and institutional leaders to address the gaps in talent management practices. For Polytechnics, strategies to enhance recruitment and retention should be prioritized. Federal Universities may need to strengthen succession planning to sustain leadership pipelines. Meanwhile, Colleges of Education should consolidate their strengths in succession management while improving retention structures. Collectively, these efforts would ensure a more balanced and effective human capital strategy across Nigeria's higher educational system.

Our research is cross-sectional, which has certain limitations, and for future study we suggest the use of mixed method like longitudinal study and structured interviews that could provide rich contextual explanations for the perceptual differences identified in this quantitative study.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusion

The study examined academics' perceptions of talent management practices across Federal University, State

Polytechnic, and State College of Education in Delta State. Findings reveal that Federal University is stronger in talent acquisition and retention, Colleges of Education demonstrate more effective succession planning, while Polytechnic generally lag behind across most dimensions of talent management. Importantly, talent development practices were perceived as fairly similar across all institutions.

The results underscore the fact that institutional type and ownership structure significantly shape how talent management practices are perceived and implemented. While federal institutions benefit from superior resource allocation, state colleges appear to leverage their smaller size and culture of mentorship to ensure leadership continuity. The disparities observed confirm previous scholarship emphasizing the importance of context in shaping human resource management outcomes within higher education.

## Recommendations

Arising from the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are proffered:

- 1 Strengthen Recruitment in Polytechnics: Policymakers should design targeted interventions to make polytechnics more attractive to qualified academics, including competitive salary structures, research funding, and career growth pathways.
- 2 Improve Retention Strategies: All institutions, particularly Polytechnics and Colleges of Education, should invest in better retention policies, such as transparent promotion criteria, enhanced welfare packages, and improved work–life balance initiatives.
- 3 Enhance Succession Planning in Universities: Federal Universities should establish structured succession planning frameworks, including leadership development programs, mentorship schemes, and proactive role replacement strategies.
- 4 Consolidate Professional Development: Since perceptions of talent development were consistent across institutions, efforts should focus on sustaining and expanding training opportunities, research collaborations, and continuous professional learning.
- 5 Future researchers should enlarge the scope, and also consider longitudinal as well as qualitative interviews to verify some of the areas that this research scope did not cover.

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