



## Corporate university as a talent management strategy

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### ABSTRACT

Talent Management represents a crucial strategic challenge for contemporary organizations, operating in an environment characterized by fast changes and intense competition. Faced with this challenging scenario, the Corporate University emerges as an innovative strategy, offering comprehensive solutions to meet this pressing challenge. The purpose of this study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the relevance and impacts of the Corporate University as an essential component of the Talent Management strategy. By adopting an exploratory approach, the research aims to obtain a broad and in-depth view of research and studies related to Talent Management and Corporate University. The study highlighted the intrinsic complexity of talent management, evidenced by the various perceptions of the term "talent". This approach has enabled to elucidate the nuances and potentialities of Corporate University as a key element in strategic talent management, highlighting its significant role in the development of technical and behavioral skills that play a crucial role in talent retention.

**Keywords:** Talent Management, Corporate University, Strategy.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Talent Management represents a strategic set of practices adopted by organizations to identify, attract, develop and retain highly qualified professionals, who are fundamental to the company's success. In a dynamic and highly competitive business scenario, Talent Management recognizes the strategic importance of exceptional employees, going beyond simply filling key positions and actively investing in practices that favor these professionals. This proactive approach aims to align individual talent competencies with organizational goals and objectives, driving growth and ensuring competitiveness in the market.

Thus, Talent Management becomes essential for contemporary organizations that operate in a dynamic and competitive environment, demanding the implementation of effective strategies that recognize the vital contribution of employees to organizational success. In this context, the Corporate University stands out as an innovative strategy to face the challenges of Talent Management. Positioning itself as a strategic center for learning and development, the Corporate University offers customized programs to



enhance employees' technical and behavioral skills. This approach aims not only to fill skills gaps, but also to strengthen the organizational culture and reaffirm the commitment to the continuous development of talent, consolidating itself as a fundamental pillar in the strategic management of human resources.

In this context, the guiding question that arises is: How can the Corporate University be established as an effective strategy for talent management in organizations? This study seeks, therefore, to analyze the relevance and impacts of the Corporate University as an integral part of the Talent Management strategy.

## 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter aims to expose the pertinent concepts of Talent Management and Corporate University for the objective achievement of the proposed theme.

### 2.1 TALENT MANAGEMENT

Globalization has been fundamental for the change in mentality of organizations, which increasingly understand that the worker is not only a resource that can be summed up only in the relationship of operation and production, but also someone important who actively participates in the entire cycle of work activities (Oliva, Roman and Mazzali, 2010). Thus, the employee who was previously just a simple worker, now gains a voice within the organization and becomes someone active and integrated into the context of the organization's performance processes (Beyer and Soler, 2019). This change in perspective values human capital in the corporate context and gives rise to Talent Management.

Talent Management focuses on identifying, attracting, developing, retaining, and leveraging individual and collective talent within the organization for the purpose of achieving goals, addressing challenges, and implementing business strategies. Due to its relevance, Talent Management is currently one of the main and urgent concerns in the field of human resource management, representing one of the most significant challenges faced by several organizations (Valverde, Scullion and Ryan, 2013).

According to Tarique and Schuler (2009), Talent Management is a strategy that seeks to ensure continuous access to the best skills, aligning them with the needs of the organization and promoting its development. It goes beyond mere selection, encompassing *feedback*, performance appraisal, and retention strategies. In short, this approach aims to maximize the potential of professionals to drive the success of the organization in a global context.

Van Zyl, Mathafena and Ras (2017) highlight that Talent Management emerges as a crucial differentiator for forward-looking companies and becomes a strategic priority for organizations seeking profitability. This becomes even more evident when we consider factors such as demographic changes, mobility, globalization, the economic context, and business transformations. Therefore, it is suggested that Talent Management is not only limited to the development of human resources, but also entails the creation



of a distinctive structure, ensuring individual progress to fill strategic roles within the organization.

Phillips and Roper (2009) developed a specific Talent Management model for the real estate sector, which, due to its scope, can be applied to several areas of activity. This model incorporates five elements in Talent Management: attraction, selection, involvement, development, and retention.

Initially, it is crucial to attract talented individuals with the skills, experience, and traits that best align with the organization's needs and culture. They should be seen as assets capable of conferring a superior competitive advantage to the company. Next, the selection aims to choose talents with great potential for the organization. Engagement entails providing opportunities for employees to actively participate and contribute to organizational goals. Development ensures that these talents stay up-to-date and are prepared to take on new responsibilities. In addition, talent retention is key to reducing turnover, ensuring that investments in training and development convert into a lasting competitive advantage for the organization (Phillips and Roper, 2009).

At the heart of this model are the organization's values and competencies. Attraction, selection, engagement, empowerment and retention are intertwined through the learning process. Therefore, it is critical that when defining its human resource management strategy, an organization is based on the values and competencies it represents. It is these competencies that will be transmitted to the new talents who join the organization and that will continue to be cultivated throughout their training (Phillips and Roper, 2009).

Authors Tansley and Tietze (2013) emphasize that talent management involves the planning and implementation of strategies and methods aimed at attracting, identifying, developing, and retaining talented professionals who offer significant value to the organization. These approaches are strengthened by Almeida (2004), who defines the performance of Talent Management in conjunction with the Human Resources area, highlighting the concentration on the integration of talent acquisition, selection, retention and development processes.

### **2.1.1 Definitions of talent**

The concept of the term "talent" was understood as a monetary value or a unit of weight. However, this interpretation was relevant only until the Middle Ages. After this period, talent is understood as a natural or acquired skill or capacity that must be recognized, developed, and used (Meyers et al., 2013). However, within the organizational environment, there is a discussion of different interpretations of the concept. The perspective of talent as innate suggests that some people are born with special abilities and aptitudes to perform certain tasks or functions. These abilities are considered innate, meaning they are part of the individual's genetic makeup.

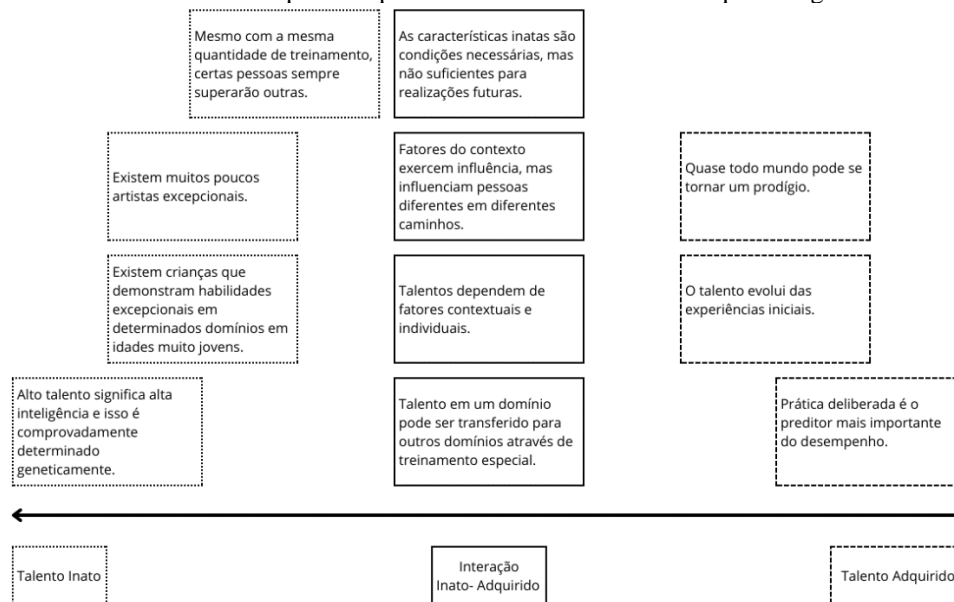
In the organizational context, this view can lead to a recruitment approach that seeks to identify candidates who already naturally possess the desired skills. It's a more static view of talent, where the

emphasis is on people's innate traits. On the other hand, there is the acquired talent perspective, which emphasizes that skills and competencies can be developed, improved, and acquired over time through effort, training, and experience. In this context, organizations can adopt a talent development approach by investing in training, education, and capacity building programs to improve the skills of their employees. This view is more dynamic and implies that skills can be cultivated.

There is also a third line of thought that suggests that a talent is influenced by personal context. This perspective sees that innate characteristics are important, but not sufficient for future achievements, so special training can increase talent mastery (Meyers et al., 2013).

The authors made a graphic representation, linking the extremes of innate talent to acquired talent and presenting the main arguments that defend each line of thought.

FIGURE 1 – Graphical representation of innate *versus* acquired arguments



FONT: ADAPTADO DE Meyers et al., 2013, p. 308

Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013) also present different definitions of talent, based on two lines of thought that follow different paths within the corporate context: talent as an object or a subject.

Talent as an object is a broader approach, as it can verify that skills, knowledge, and competencies can be cultivated by people. Companies that adopt this perspective usually invest in training and tools to promote the development of their professionals. On the other hand, when an organization adopts an approach that views talent as a subject, it can result in a narrower view, where talent is seen as an innate trait of people. In this scenario, only employees who naturally possess the characteristics desired by the company are considered talents (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013).



### 2.1.2 Implications of different definitions of talent in talent management

The way we understand talent, whether as an innate trait, acquired over time or resulting from the interactions of concepts, has significant implications for the implementation of talent management in practice. This understanding influences, for example, whether talent management should focus more on identifying and selecting talented individuals or developing talent.

The innate talent view holds that valuable resources can confer a lasting competitive advantage on companies. Meyers et al., (2013) argue that talent management should focus efforts on recruiting, identifying, and retaining the most qualified candidates, in addition to establishing a solid reputation as an attractive employer.

To identify and recruit talent when talent is presumed to be innate, it is essential to rely on robust conceptual models, use reliable assessments, and combat societal biases. The assessment of intelligence often serves as a key indicator of talent due to its strong correlation with future performance in the workplace. In addition, the author points out that effective retention management is crucial after identifying or recruiting talent. This involves segmenting the workforce based on the uniqueness and strategic importance of positions, developing specific expertise internally, and fostering working relationships that foster mutual commitment. These strategies aim to establish lasting bonds between the company and its talented employees, thereby increasing retention rates.

When considering talent as an acquired quality, Meyers et al., (2013) point out that talent management focuses on the constant improvement of employees' skills, emphasizing the development of human resources and applying various practices, such as training in management skills, assignment of challenges, exposure to initial leadership experiences, rotation of functions, *coaching* and mentoring.

The main difference between talent management based on acquired talent and that innate is the more inclusive approach of the former. When talent is perceived as something that can be developed, a greater number of people have the potential to become talented, which reduces the need to focus heavily on identifying and recruiting talent. However, criteria such as relevant past experiences and the ability to learn from experience still influence the hiring process.

After hiring, the focus shifts to training and development, with the possibility of upskilling programs offered to all employees. This inclusive approach is based on the belief that every team member can become a high-performing professional as long as they are provided with the proper learning opportunities. Establishing an organizational culture that values the capabilities of all employees is critical, and practices such as deliberate practice and experience-based learning play a crucial role in developing employee skills. In addition, effective evaluation and optimization of training handoff is essential to ensure that development investments are successful. Organizations can also utilize resume databases to plan for succession based on employees' learning experiences and cultivate long-term relationships with those who have been well-



trained, even if they may leave the organization.

For the perspective that considers talent as an interaction between genetic and contextual factors, it has significant practical implications for talent management. One of them concerns the transfer of talent, allowing talent in one field to be applied in other similar fields with limited effort, which is particularly relevant in a labor market with a shortage of skilled workers, enabling a broader and more creative recruitment strategy, seeking candidates with suitable characteristics for the role, even if they have excelled in different areas.

Potential assessment should be tailored to the essential, growth and career dimensions, focusing on characteristics related to potential. Talent development should prioritize the growth of career dimension factors. Motivation plays a key role in the talent development process, and Talent Management practices should aim to enhance employee motivation. In addition, the context and environment in which talent development takes place are fundamental, and Talent Management needs to be dynamic and adaptable to the context or individual. Creating an organizational environment that facilitates talent development and promotes balance in the use of talent in different situations is also crucial in talent retention (Meyers et al., 2013).

## 2.2 CORPORATE UNIVERSITY CONCEPT

A Corporate University functions as an internal educational system in an organization that provides training, development, and continuous learning for its employees, with the aim of aligning the skills and knowledge of employees with the strategic needs of the company, thus promoting organizational growth and effectiveness (Meister, 1999). This approach is based on the assumption that there are eventual projects and processes that require certain knowledge and skills, and to meet this demand it is not feasible to evaluate the market, but rather to instruct the internal public to achieve the desired objective, aligning employees with the company's strategic objectives, improving their performance and contributing to the organization's long-term growth and success.

Freire et al. (2016) say that Corporate Universities act as the main strategic center for the education and improvement of employees, as well as members of the value chain, such as customers, suppliers, and dealers. In addition, it plays a key role in disseminating the organization's culture and promoting the development not only of specific technical skills, but also of fundamental skills for the work environment, such as the ability to continuously learn, leadership, creativity and problem-solving. Corporate Universities, in addition to ensuring increasingly qualified professionals, also function as a retention strategy for organizations (Hanashiro et al., 2013)

Aires, Freire and Souza (2017) refer to Meister (1999) and present the ten steps (Table 1) that organizations can follow in the search for a competitive advantage. In addition, the authors highlight that



the Corporate University model presented by Freire et al. (2016) is the most contemporary approach for organizations that aim to obtain competitive advantage through innovation. This is because employees are better prepared and, as a result, can contribute steadily and consistently to process and product innovation, a key element for organizational competitiveness.

TABLE 1: OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE UC

<b>Basic characteristics of a Corporate University (UC)</b>
1. Provide learning opportunities that support the most important business issues of the organization.
2. Consider the UC model as a process and not a physical space for learning.
3. Design a curriculum that incorporates the three Cs: Corporate Citizenship, Contextual Structure, and Basic Skills.
4. Train the value chain and partners, including customers, distributors, product suppliers as well as universities that can provide the workers of tomorrow.
5. Move from instructor-led training to various learning presentation formats.
6. Encourage and facilitate leaders' engagement with learning.
7. Move from the corporate financing model by allocation to "self-financing" by the units of business.
8. Take a global focus on the development of learning solutions.
9. Create a system for evaluating results and investments.
10. Use UC to gain competitive advantage and enter new markets.

SOURCE: AIRES, FREIRE AND SOUZA (2017), BASED ON MEISTER (1999)

### 2.2.1 Evolution of corporate universities

Corporate Universities emerge through a heated and competitive labor market, and their main objective is to act in people management, offering training opportunities to their employees, which were previously called Training and Development Center (Meister, 1999). For Freire et al. (2016), the concept of Corporate University has a predecessor, the corporate colleges. This term was introduced around 1985 and had the function of offering functional training, but without the mission of educating, being composed of proposals from educational institutions, whether or not they were for profit. The authors conclude by stating that the idea of Corporate Universities multiplied in the early 1990s.

Eboli (2004) understands that at first, the areas of training and development were essentially shaped according to the Taylorist view, characterized by the separation between the conception and execution of the work. In this approach, the mere replication of knowledge and the repetition of tasks were considered sufficient to ensure the satisfactory performance of employees. The main objective was to develop highly technical skills in response to the needs of the different sectors of the company. The training programs were directed exclusively to the competencies and knowledge required by the employees' positions, with no connection to the company's business strategies, that is, they did not contribute significantly to the organization's results.

This view of training and development is presented by Aires, Freire and Souza (2017) within a framework of evolution of this concept to the so-called Corporate Universities.



FIGURE 2 – Evolution of Corporate Education

Estágios dos modelos de aprendizagem corporativa	Características
Formação e Treinamento	Iniciou em 1920 até o início da década de 1970. Instrução de funcionários para a melhoria de habilidades operacionais.
Educação Corporativa	Surgiu no final da década de 1950 com os primeiros centros de educação corporativa da <i>General Motors</i> e da <i>McDonald's</i> .  Foco na formação de funcionários para tarefas operacionais alinhadas com a estratégia da organização.
Aprendizagem em Rede	Surgiu na década de 70 com a necessidade de ir além do treinamento e desenvolvimento (T&D). Foco no desenvolvimento de capacidades, habilidades e atitudes operacionais, táticas e estratégicas. Surgem os programas de qualidade total, o desenvolvimento de lideranças e a profissionalização da cadeira de suprimentos. Surge o termo <i>Universidade Corporativa</i> , com o intuito de denominar a gama de ações de educação corporativa realizada pelas organizações.

SOURCE: AIRES, FREIRE AND SOUZA (2017), BASED ON MARGHERITA AND SECUNDO (2009) AND MEISTER (1998).

Hanashiro et al. (2013) reinforce the view established by Figure 1, when they point out that the evolution of training and development programs in companies gave rise to Corporate Universities, which were established with the purpose of improving the skills of employees.

According to Vergara (2000), the concepts of training and development are interconnected with the planning levels, with programs directed to the tactical and operational levels, while the Corporate Universities focus on the strategic level. The author also points out that, in general, training and development programs are restricted to employees, while Corporate Universities have a broader scope, including stakeholders. In addition, Vergara (2000) emphasizes that Corporate Universities complement the aforementioned programs, introducing the idea of education as a continuous process and emphasizing the importance of a cohesive and strong organizational culture, highlighting the need to align the company's purposes and the development of its employees.

This relationship is supported by Freire et al. (2016) who state that the area of training and development evolved from corporate education after the increase in the influence of the Human Resources sector on organizational strategy, this area evolved again to Corporate Universities.

### 3 MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed an exploratory research approach to fulfill the proposed objective, this methodology aims to "provide greater familiarity with the problem, with a view to making it more explicit" (Gil, 2009, p.41). Exploratory research is an appropriate choice when seeking to understand a complex and underexplored topic, such as the relationship between Corporate Universities as a strategy for Talent Management. The exploratory approach allows for a literature review and critical analysis of previous studies to identify trends, gaps, and areas of interest that merit further investigation.





A literature review was conducted, which played a key role in this exploratory study. The review was carried out with the objective of identifying relevant concepts and studies on corporate universities, talent management and their intersection. The literature search included academic databases, newspapers and magazines for the analysis of scientific articles, books and theses.

#### 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Talent Management is presented as a response to the change in perspective about the worker, now recognized as someone active and integrated into the organization's cycle of activities. This perspective is justified by the nature of Talent Management, which embraces modernity with a focus on attracting, developing, retaining and leveraging talent in order to be a competitive advantage by achieving goals and implementing strategies (Valverde, Scullion and Ryan, 2013; Tarique and Schuler, 2009; Van Zyl and Mathafena 2017).

Corporate Universities, on the other hand, emerged from the evolution of the training and development area (Meister, 1999; Eboli, 2004; Aires, Freire and Souza, 2016; Hanashiro et al., 2013), motivated by the need to meet the complexity of the organizational environment, reaching tactical and strategic levels, while training and development focused only on improving operational skills. This view is found in figure 1 and reinforced by Vergara (2000), who adds that Corporate Universities add to training and development programs, including not only employees, but can also reach *stakeholders*. In essence, Corporate Universities work with education and improvement within the organization, providing continuous learning and dissemination of the organizational culture, thus being a relevant competitive advantage, as described in table 1 by Aires, Freire and Souza (2016).

Based on this understanding, it is notable that Talent Management and Corporate Universities are interconnected with a contemporary approach to valuing employees by promoting the development of the organization. In this way, both contribute to a relevant competitive advantage, aligning with the strategic objectives of the organization.

Despite this correlation, Talent Management has different approaches to attracting, selecting, developing, and retaining talent. This is because there is no consensus on the concept of Talent, especially within the organizational context. Meyers et al. (2013) present, through the graphic representation of figure 1, the main arguments that support Talent as innate, acquired and an interaction between both. Gallardo-Gallardo et al. (2013) reinforce the view of acquired talent as an object and innate talent as a subject. Thus, the insertion of a Corporate University as a strategy for Talent Management can have different impacts due to the implications of different talent concepts in Talent Management.

The following table was prepared in order to present how Corporate Universities operate and align themselves with Talent Management.



FIGURE 3 – Corporate Universities as a strategy for Talent Management Models

Universidades Corporativas	Modelos de Gestão de Talentos		
	Inato	Adquirido	Interação Inato e Adquirido
Atuação	Desenvolvimento de conhecimentos técnicos específicos para estratégia de gestão de retenção.	Centro de educação e aprimoramento dos colaboradores contribuindo para valorização da cultura organizacional.	Capacitação para dimensões de carreira garantindo vantagem competitiva de retenção
Alinhamento	Distante do cerne das Universidades Corporativas, por limitar-se ao lidar com desenvolvimento de talentos inatos.	Consistente a termos de abrangência de desenvolvimento e inclusão de todas as partes da organização.	Integra abordagens inatas e adquiridas, reconhecendo a importância do desenvolvimento para talentos inatos.

SOURCE: PREPARED BY THE AUTHORS

In the innate talent view, Talent Management highlights the importance of recruiting, identifying, and retaining candidates with valuable innate skills. In this way, Corporate Universities work in the development of specific technical knowledge for effective retention management. Despite this, the model moves away from the core of Corporate Universities, where the emphasis is on the ability to instruct and develop the competencies of employees, while the vision of innate talent assumes that the fundamental skills already exist in the candidates. Therefore, the Corporate University's strategy may not be the most effective in dealing with the approach that values innate talent.

On the other hand, Corporate Universities consistently align with the approach that considers talent as an acquired quality in talent management. This perspective seeks to foster an organizational culture that recognizes and values the abilities of all employees, contributing to the organization's growth and lasting success. In this context, Corporate Universities can act as a strategic center for the education and improvement of employees, seeking skills and competencies internally, thus reducing focus on attraction and selection. This inclusive and comprehensive approach aligns with the belief that talent can be improved over time.

Phillips and Roper (2009) present a Talent Management model without explicitly defining the nature of talent, however, it is suggested an approach that considers both innate and acquired aspects of Talent Management. This is justified because the author presents the attraction and selection of talents with the competencies and characteristics that best align with the organization as key elements. In addition, development prepares employees to take on new functions, playing a relevant role for career dimensions that guarantees a competitive advantage for retention, establishing themselves as the points of action of Corporate Universities within this model.



## 5 CONCLUSION

The critical analysis carried out through previous studies allowed us to visualize theoretical evidence that reflects the objective of this research.

The purpose of this study is to understand the relevance of Corporate Universities as an essential component of the Talent Management strategy. It was observed that this relevance is intrinsically linked to the development of technical and behavioral skills, which, in turn, significantly strengthen talent retention.

The complexity inherent to Talent Management is evidenced by the existence of several conceptions about the meaning of the term "talent", including perspectives that consider it innate, acquired or the result of an interaction between both. Each of these conceptions gives rise to distinct talent management models, based on different principles.

These different approaches, in turn, have unique impacts on Corporate Universities. When defining the focus of their relevance, these institutions consider the specific nuances of each Talent Management model. Orientation can be focused on a retention strategy, emphasizing the development of specific knowledge (innate model). Alternatively, the emphasis may be on education at all levels and on aligning organizational culture for all members of the organization (acquired model). There is also the possibility of directing efforts specifically towards building careers (innate and acquired interaction model). Ultimately, understanding the varied conceptions of talent and the strategic adaptation of corporate universities are key to optimizing their impact in the context of talent management.

Although this study has contributed to advancing the understanding of the intersection between talent management and corporate universities, it is essential to recognize its limitations, which can impact the generalization and interpretation of results.

The significant variation of organizational dynamics across industries, company sizes, or cultural contexts is an important factor to consider, and may limit the widespread applicability of the findings. This study was based primarily on theoretical and conceptual reviews, and lacked the inclusion of empirical data from field research or case studies. Incorporating practical evidence would not only strengthen the conclusions, but also contextualize them more deeply.

In considering these limitations, it is crucial to recognize that future research can address these questions, enhancing understanding and offering a more complete picture of the complexities involved in the successful integration of Talent Management and Corporate Universities strategies.



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