




UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE



RECRUITMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: WHO SHOULD OWN THE TALENT PIPELINE?

External Recruitment Agencies vs. Internal HR
Departments

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Recruitment defines institutional reputation and transformation progress.



Universities are facing competition from both local and global employers.



Hiring speed, quality, and cost all impact institutional sustainability.





RECRUITMENT DEFINES NOT JUST WHO WE HIRE, BUT WHO WE BECOME AS AN INSTITUTION.

Strategic:



- ☐ Governance,
- ☐ Transformation,
- ☐ Institutional brand

Operational:



- ☐ Cost,
- ☐ Turnaround time,
- ☐ Expertise balance

Best Practice:



- ☐ Clear policy,
- ☐ Hybrid model,
- ☐ Ethical recruitment



Who should own recruitment in Higher Education Institutions?



THE CORE DILEMMA

Dimension	External Agencies	Internal HR / HCM Dept
Expertise & Networks	Specialised headhunting; industry reach	Institutional understanding; cultural fit
Cost	Commission (10–25% of annual salary) per hire	Salaried HR team; lower marginal cost
Speed	Shorter turnaround for hard-to-fill posts	May be slower due to internal bureaucracy
Equity & Compliance	Risk of non-alignment with EE/HE Acts	Ensures compliance with institutional EE goals
Brand Representation	Agency markets institution externally	Internal HR builds authentic employer brand
Confidentiality & Risk	Third-party data handling	Controlled data management & governance



Scenario 1: Dean appointment in 30 days, global candidates, HR is short-staffed. Do we use an agency or internal HR? Governance implications



Scenario 2: Internal bias claims – VC wants an external firm. How to restore credibility while maintaining institutional control?



Does outsourcing dilute institutional transformation accountability? What is the risk of outsourcing?



HYBRID AND STRATEGIC MODELS

A hybrid approach combines external networks with internal oversight.

Preferred-supplier panels ensure transformation alignment and quality control.

Employer branding must remain an internal HR function.

Digital tools (HEJobs, LinkedIn, ATS integrations) can strengthen efficiency.



BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

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Develop a clear policy on when to engage agencies.

Define governance structures for approval.

Establish service-level agreements (SLAs) aligned with EE objectives.

Maintain institutional data ownership.

Conduct performance audits of agencies.



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

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