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Talent Management in Public Sector Organizations: A Study on the Impact of Contextual Factors on the TM Approach in Flemish and Dutch Public Sector Organizations

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Abstract

Public sector organizations are confronted with the intensifying competition for talent and suffer from a chronic shortage of talented people. There is little empirical research on the specific talent management (TM) issues in the public sector. This article aims to clarify how public sector organizations conceptualize TM, and particularly what (contextual) factors influence the adoption of an inclusive or a more segmented people management approach in the public sector. Theory on institutional mechanisms and institutional logics is used to clarify the impact of contextual factors. The empirical data are collected in two substudies on TM in the public sector. The data show that TM is highly contextual. Both the organizational internal and external context affect the intended TM strategy, including the actors involved in TM and their interrelated logs. This article is among the first to explore conceptually and empirically the influence of institutional logics on the different aspects of TM approach and as such provides some new directions for future TM research.

Keywords

talent management, public sector organizations, institutional theory, institutional logics, workforce differentiation

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Introduction

Finding talented people is one of the most important managerial preoccupation for this decade (Iles, Chuai, & Preece, 2010; Stahl et al., 2012; Ulrich & Allen, 2014). Also public sector organizations are confronted with the intensifying competition for talent and some even suffer from a chronic shortage of talented people (Glenn, 2012; Macfarlane, Duberley, Fewtrell, & Powell, 2012). However, there is little academic attention for the specific talent management (TM) issues in public sector organizations, how they define talent, and how successful they are in their battle for talent (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016; Thunnissen, Boselie, & Fruytier, 2013). The majority of the TM publications focuses on TM in private sector organizations, multinationals, and organizations in the U.S. context (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016; Powell et al., 2012; Vaiman & Collings, 2013). In some empirical TM studies, data are collected in both the public and private sectors (e.g., Kim & Scullion, 2011; Sonnenberg, van Zijderveld, & Brinks, 2014), but differences between the sectors are not considered in discussing the data. Just a handful of publications pay explicit attention to TM issues in nonprofit or public organizations, such as health care institutes (e.g., Groves, 2011; Powell et al., 2012), (higher) education institutes (e.g., Davies & Davies, 2010; van den Brink, Fruytier, & Thunnissen, 2013), or local or central government organizations (e.g., Glenn, 2012; Harrisr & Foster, 2010). Despite the increasing attention for TM in the academic literature over the course of the last decade (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016), TM in the public sector is an underexplored field of research.

According to Christensen, Lægreid, Roness, and Røvik (2007), the public sector context is complex due to significant impact of institutional mechanisms. This implies that the organizational context has to be considered in studying TM in the public sector. Yet, the growing awareness of the impact of contextual factors in the shaping of the employment relationship and human resource management (HRM; Paauwe, 2004; Wright & Nishii, 2013) is largely neglected in academic TM research. In many TM studies—in public and in private sector organizations—the organizational context is taken for granted, and researchers fail to use the external and internal organizational context to explain how organizations conceptualize and implement TM (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016). Several authors call up for more research on TM in a variety of countries and sectors of industry, and advise to contextualize TM in both theoretical frameworks and in research designs (e.g., Collings, Scullion, & Vaiman, 2011; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014; Thunnissen et al., 2013).

This article on TM in the public sector wants to contribute to the above-mentioned concerns and is focused on the contextual relevance. The aim of the article is twofold. First, we aim to increase our understanding of how public sector organizations conceptualize and shape their TM approach (i.e., How is talent and TM defined, what are the objectives, and the activities and practices?). Second, we particularly aim to clarify the underlying external and internal mechanisms and logics affecting the shaping of the TM approach in public sector organizations. The origin of this article lies in two studies on TM in public sector organizations in the Benelux countries: a study on TM in

Flemish (local) governmental organizations and a study on TM in Dutch public universities. The organizations in both studies adopted a different approach to TM—either predominantly a soft, inclusive or a hard, exclusive approach—and the data allow us to investigate what (contextual) factors influence the adoption of an inclusive or a more segmented approach to people management in the public sector. We have used theory on institutional mechanisms and institutional logics to build a theoretical framework in which the role of contextual factors in the conceptualization of TM (in terms of objectives and intended practices) is incorporated. This framework is explained in the next section.

Theoretical Framework

The TM Approach

TM is often described as the systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement/retention, and deployment of talents (e.g., Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2006; Scullion, Collings, & Caligiuri, 2010; Stewart & Harte, 2010). Within their TM definitions, authors adopt different terms for "talent": for example "excellent abilities", but also terms like "key employees" or "high potentials" are used. The variety of terms used to define talent reflects one of the most central debates in TM, that is, whether TM is an inclusive or an exclusive approach (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & González-Cruz, 2013; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). The inclusive approach is based on the belief that all employees have qualities and strengths that can be valuable for the organization. In this view, TM is approached as "the recognition and acceptance that all employees have talent, together with the ongoing evaluation and deployment of employees in positions that give the best fit and opportunity (via participation) for employees to use those talents" (Swailes, Downs, & Orr, 2014, p. 5). The exclusive TM orientation is aimed at a select group of employees whose skills, abilities, and performance are unique and very valuable for the organization (cf. Lepak & Snell, 1999), and/or occupy strategically important positions within the organization. For the exclusive approach, the definition of Collings and Mellahi (2009) is often cited: "the activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions which differentially contribute to the organization's sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high potential and high performing incumbents to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents and to ensure their continued commitment to the organization. (p. 304)"

A review study of Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen (2016) shows that the academic definition of talent seems to shift toward an exclusive approach. However, in many public sector organizations, the principle of equality—implying that all workers are equal and should be treated as equal as much as possible—has a strong tradition (Boselie, Leisink, & Vandenabeele, 2011). Adopting this principle to the workplace implies that all employees should get the same chances to develop and grow, including equal promotion opportunities. This leaves little room for differentiation, as in the

exclusive approach to TM, and entails that the inclusive approach would be more favorable in the public sector. Yet, literature shows that both inclusive and exclusive approaches occur in public sector organizations (e.g., Glenn, 2012; Kock & Burke, 2008; Macfarlane et al., 2012), but the rationale behind these approaches unfortunately remains vague.

The exclusive versus inclusive view on talent and TM is related to the commonly accepted distinction between "hard" and "soft" HRM (Guest, 1999; Truss, Gratton, Hope-Hailey, McGovern, & Stiles, 1997). In the "hard" approach to HRM, the interests of the organization prevail over those of the employee, and a managerial and utilitarian perspective on individuals is dominant. Practices mainly focus on measuring, controlling, and increasing performance (Guest, 1999; Truss et al., 1997). Investing in a select group of high-performing employees occupying key organizational positions—as in the exclusive TM approach—is regarded as a mean to directly improve organizational performance (e.g., Beechler & Woodward, 2009). The current TM literature mainly emphasizes economic organizational goals, such as flexibility, productivity, and competitive advantage (Thunnissen et al., 2013), although some scholars stress the importance of a less unilateral view on TM objectives and practices (Collings, 2014; Farndale, Pai, Sparrow, & Scullion, 2014; Thunnissen et al., 2013). In the "soft" approach to HRM, the interests and rights of the employee are a concern, parallel to the interests of the organization. Therefore, "soft" TM practices (also) focus on increasing commitment, and personal and professional development of employees to retain and motivate employees (Guest, 1999). In line with the pluralist view of the "soft" HRM approach, Thunnissen et al. (2013) propose a more multilevel orientation toward the outcomes of TM. They argue that the economic and noneconomic interests and goals of multiple stakeholders—employee, organization, and possibly even society—need to be considered as separate and equal TM objectives. This broad orientation toward outcomes is particularly relevant for public sector organizations, because of the multiplicity of stakeholders and of organizational objectives and their role as "public employer in society" (Thunnissen et al., 2013). In this article, we will investigate whether public sector organizations do indeed adopt an inclusive and soft/developmental approach to TM in which societal and individual well-being are embodied in public organizations' TM policies and practices, or if they focus primarily on organizational well-being via increasing individual performance, as is common in the more exclusive TM approach in private and multinational organizations.

The impact of organizational context

We want to go deeper and explore *why* the organizations in our study have adopted a soft, inclusive or a hard, exclusive TM paradigm, and particularly what (contextual) factors influence the adoption of an inclusive or a more segmented people management approach in the public sector. Below theory on institutional mechanisms and institutional logics is used to clarify the impact of contextual factors.

Institutional mechanisms. New institutionalists emphasize that the behavior of organizations is a response to market pressures as well as institutional pressures

(e.g., DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Market mechanisms refer to competition between organizations operating in the same market in terms of products, technology, and people. These economically based mechanisms put pressures on organizations, demanding efficiency, effectiveness, flexibility, and innovativeness to keep ahead of the competition (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Paauwe, 2004). However, as DiMaggio and Powell (1983) state, "Organizations compete not just for resources and customers, but for political power and institutional legitimacy, for social as well as economic fitness" (p. 150). So, besides the market pressures, they refer to institutional mechanisms, which represent pressures derived from the broader institutional context and originate in legislation and procedures, norms and values, and social-cultural issues in a country or region (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Compared with private sector organizations, institutional mechanisms have a greater impact on public sector organizations than market mechanisms (Christensen et al., 2007). Only a few studies on TM in public sector organizations pay attention to the impact of the institutional context. Interestingly, some of these studies illustrate that in the case of TM, market mechanisms—that is, development on the internal and external labor market—seem to have a significant effect on the choice for a certain TM approach. In the case of increased retirement or shortages on the labor market, public sector organizations show the tendency to develop an exclusive approach to fill the pipeline for scarce and valuable positions (e.g., Delfgraauw & Dur, 2010; Glenn, 2012; Kock & Burke, 2008; Macfarlane et al., 2012).

Even though the institutional forces try to change organizations, they often result in homogeneity: Organizational characteristics are modified to make the organization compatible with the environmental characteristics, and, as a result, organizations that face the same set of environmental conditions start to resemble each other. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) call this isomorphism. They identified three institutional mechanisms through which institutional isomorphism occurs. Coercive isomorphism results from the formal and informal pressures exerted on organizations by other organizations upon which they are dependent (e.g., legal requirements by the state), or by cultural expectations in society. Mimetic processes are a response to uncertainty inside or outside the organization as the organization models itself on other, successful organizations, or adopts fashionable trends, which is called mimetic isomorphism. The third group of pressures, normative pressures, is associated with professionalization and refers to the adaption to the norms of a certain professional group that goes beyond the organization.

Despite its enormous contribution to our understanding of how cultural rules and cognitive structures shape organizational structures (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008), the theory of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) has also been criticized (e.g., Dacin, Goodstein, & Scott, 2002; Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011). First, the theory only partly describes the "drivers" or what "forced" the organization to take on a certain (TM) policy (i.e., political influence, uncertainty, normative pressures). With its focus on isomorphism, it does not explain why organizations in the same institutional context behave and respond differently, in terms of strategies, structures, and practices (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Subsequently, the theory does not take

account of the role of interests, values, and assumptions of relevant actors in and around organizations, nor the impact of human agency in the process of organizational decision making (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). In other words, the *process* through which the institutional pressures at the macro level influence the behavior of organizations and individual actors at the meso- and micro levels is still not clarified. For this study, we thus conclude that the theory of institutional mechanisms seems to fall short and needs to be complemented.

Institutional logics. To amplify this criticism, we turn to the theory of institutional logics as this complements the focus of institutional mechanisms. In this way, attention is also directed at the role of actors and the underlying motives and values that influence the consideration of what constitutes appropriate practices in an organizations' management "in given settings and at particular historical moments" (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012). In this way, room to explain the variations in the environment (rather than stressing isomorphism) appears (Thornton et al., 2012). We assume that the intended objectives, goals, and practices of the TM policy, which are present in the organizational fields under study, can be considered as indicators of the institutional logics that are used by the stakeholders.

Institutional logics are the cultural beliefs and taken-for-granted rules that shape the cognitions and behavior of actors (Greenwood et al., 2011; Lounsbury, 2007; Reay & Hinings, 2009). They provide the guidelines on how to interpret and function in social situations (Greenwood et al., 2011). In organizations, the logics determine how organizational processes take place, what results are emphasized, and how they are achieved and valued (Reay & Hinings, 2009).

According to Friedland and Alford (1991), the institutional logics originate from core societal sectors or institutions—professions, corporations, the capitalist market, the bureaucratic state, the family, and religion—in which individuals and organizations regularly interact and cohere on shared rules and beliefs. Each of these societal institutions has its own prevailing institutional logics (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). In the beginning, scholars believed that one institutional logic was dominant and guided the behavior of social actors (Greenwood et al., 2011; Lounsbury, 2007), but empirical research shows the complexity of reality. Organizations are often subject to multiple logics, because they operate within multiple institutional domains (Dunn & Jones, 2010). These multiple logics may be conflicting and competitive but also can be cooperative, orthogonal, or blurred (Currie & Spyridonidis, 2015). Scholars also found in empirical research that multiple competitive logics can separately affect different organizational processes and structures, that the impact of the logics differ in development and importance over time, and that the presence of multiple conflicting logics may negatively affect the intended outcomes of a practice or strategy (e.g., Dunn & Jones, 2010; Goodrick & Reay, 2011; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008; van den Broek, Boselie, & Paauwe, 2014).

With regard to the institutional logics that are present in the public sector, Meyer and Hammerschmid (2006) present, in their study on public administration in Austria, the legislatic-bureaucratic logic and the market-managerial logic. The market-managerial logic is reflecting the principles of the New Public Management (NPM) movement

which puts performance, organizational outcomes, efficiency, and the reliance on private sector techniques before the principles of legislatic-bureaucratic logic which promotes procedural correctness while valuing equity, legality, neutrality, and serving public interest (Meyer, Egger-Peitler, Höllerer, & Hammerschmid, 2014). In addition, organizations delivering professional and/or educational services—this is the case for the organizational fields of higher education (HE) and government—employ a broad array of occupations, which tend to be motivated and conditioned by different logics (Greenwood et al., 2011; Thornton, Jones, & Kury, 2005). As a consequence, we also integrate the professional logic in our study. van den Broek et al. (2014) characterize this logic by the dominance of criteria in which prestige and the technical quality of the services are put forward. Their study on logics in public health care shows that autonomy is a very important aspect for employees who take up this logic. A more detailed description of the three logics is submitted in Table 1.

The impact of organizational characteristics. Following Greenwood et al. (2011), we emphasize that not all organizations in an organizational field are affected equally by institutional pressures and logics. They argue that characteristics or "attributes" of the organization filter the institutional logics that are present: that is, the field position, an organization's structure, ownership, and governance. In other words, these characteristics of an organization can be considered as part of the internal context which influences the perception and construction of what is considered as the available room to maneuver in HR (human resources) policy decisions. Some of these attributes (such as organizational identity or field position) may enable organizations to resist the dominant institutional pressures (Westermann-Behaylo, Berman, & Van Buren, 2014).

The agency of key actors in TM. The majority of the above-mentioned characteristics mentioned by Greenwood et al. (2011) are related to the position and impact of key actors in the decision-making process, "who bring to the decision process their interpretation of priorities and outcomes" (Greenwood et al., 2011, p. 342). The key actors in the TM decision-making process are "gathered" in the dominant coalition—top management, supervisory board, middle and lower management, works council, and the HR manager—and the external and internal context determine their room to maneuver (Paauwe, 2004). Given the availability of multiple logics, institutional actors exhibit agency in which institutional logics they comply to and how they interpret the logics for social (inter)action (Currie & Spyridonidis, 2015). Yet, Thornton and Ocasio (2008) speak of embedded agency, because the interests, beliefs, and values of individuals and organizations are embedded in institutional logics. Higher status actors (with strong identities and sources of power) have greater influence over what logics are interpreted and for what ends (Currie & Spyridonidis, 2015; Greenwood et al., 2011; Reay & Hinings, 2009).

Conceptual model

Based on the above-mentioned theories, this study uses a conceptual framework (see Figure 1) which incorporates institutional mechanisms and logics to explain how the

Table 1. Overview of Legislatic-Bureaucratic, Market-Managerial, and Professional Logic.

	Legislatic-bureaucratic logic	Market-managerial logic	Professional logic
Resources	Procedures, legislation, political actors	Employees, money, materials	Experts, professionals, clients
Objectives and needs	Public needs: Democracy, fair treatment and price for all, citizens' well-being	Private needs: Customer satisfaction, productivity, performance, profit	Professional needs: Expertise, autonomy, craftsmanship
Social action and coordination	Bureaucratic control through rule-setting, procedural correctness	Optimization of systems, through contracts, hierarchy in decision making	Organizational spaces and climate, through associations (collegial principle), socialization
Values	Fairness, equity, legality, serving public interest	Efficiency, effectiveness	Quality, reliability, safety, innovation
Economic system	Rule based	Performance based	Membership based
Sources of identity	Organization as a public organization	Organization as a corporate organization	Organization as professional organization
Sources of legitimacy	Conformity to rules	Hierarchical position	Reputation
Sources of authority	State	Top management	Profession
Basis of mission	Fulfill policy goals	Increase organizational performance	Produce knowledge, innovation
Basis of strategy	Conform political requests	Positioning in market niches	Constructing reputation

Source. Based on Canhilal, Lepori, and Seeber (2016); Goodrick and Reay (2011); Meyer, Egger-Peitler, Höllerer, and Hammerschmid (2014); and Noordegraaf (2015).

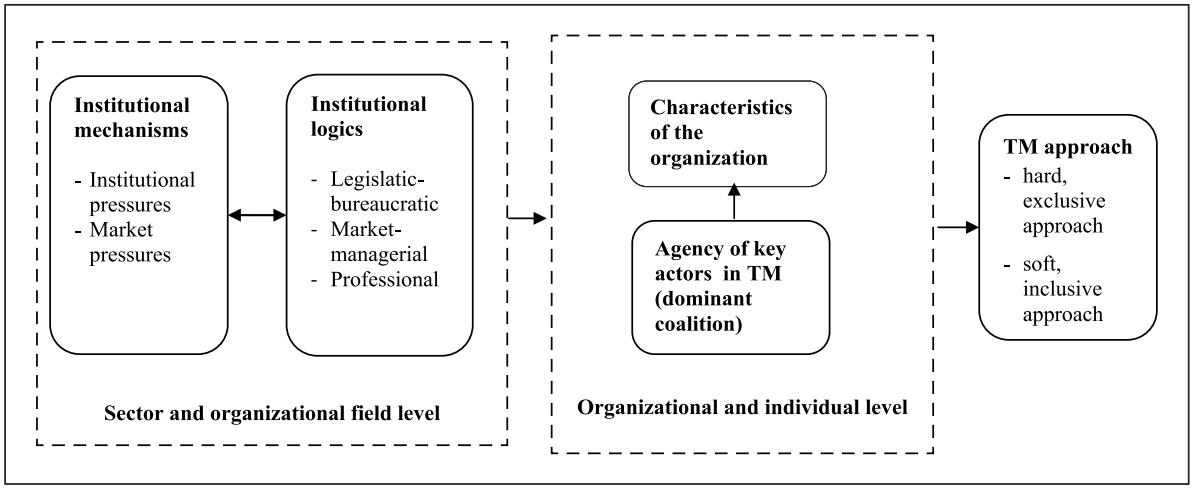

Figure 1. Conceptual model.
Note. TM = talent management.

environment of an organization influences adoption of an inclusive versus a segmented people management approach (in terms of objectives and practices). We make a distinction between mechanisms and logics at the sector and organizational field level (i.e., institutional mechanisms and institutional logics), and at the organizational and individual level (i.e., organizational characteristics and agency of key actors involved in TM). In this way, the choice of an organization for one or another TM approach is elucidated.

We are aware that contextual factors also can affect the actual implementation of TM as well as the perceptions and attitudes and behaviors of employees (Vandenabeele, Leisink, & Knies, 2013; Wright & Nishii, 2013), but due to the scope of the study, we only focus on the development of the *intended* TM policy. In fact, the intended TM approach in both studies—being an exclusive and performance-oriented (hard) TM approach versus an inclusive and developmental (soft) TM approach—is the starting point of our analysis.

Research Methods

In this article, we address four research questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What characterizes the (intended) TM approach of the organizations under study (in terms of objectives, activities, and practices)?
Research Question 2 (RQ 2): What institutional mechanisms and institutional logics affect the adoption of a specific TM approach?
Research Question 3 (RQ 3): What internal, organizational characteristics affect the decision-making process regarding the intended TM approach?
Research Question 4 (RQ 4): What is the role of key actors involved in TM in the organization, and their interrelated values and interests in this process?

The information on these questions comes from two research projects on TM in public sector organizations: Flemish (local) governmental organizations and Dutch public universities. We combined these studies on TM in two different subsectors, because the differences in the TM approach in both studies and the multilevel approach in both studies—which is rare in empirical TM research (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016)—enable us to identify the mechanisms and logics that cause this variance. Table 2 gives an overview of the data gathering and their linkage to the key elements of the conceptual model.

Study 1: TM in Dutch Public Universities

The first study concerns a qualitative study on TM policies and practices in Dutch public universities. Usually, universities in the Netherlands have separate HRM approaches for the academic and the support staff, and often the HR policy for academic staff is more comprehensive than the policy for the support staff. This is also the case for the TM approach. In Study 1, we focused on the TM policies for the academic staff.

The data were gathered in two substudies. First, information on the reforms in the internal and external context of Dutch HE institutes was gathered (Study 1A in Table 2). This substudy consisted of a review of (empirical) research on reforms in HE in general and in HRM in particular (approximately 30 reports of empirical studies), and a small qualitative study in which 14 representatives of the relevant stakeholder groups, both inside and outside Dutch academia, were interviewed. The interviews focused on influential recent developments in the context of HE organizations, and how these developments affected the academic organization, academic work, and the academics selves.

In the second substudy (Study 1B), data were collected through case study research within five Dutch university departments. The selection of the cases was based on four criteria—(a) Each selected department represented one of the core academic disciplines: humanities, social sciences, law, medical sciences, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); (b) general, technical, and smaller universities had to be included in the study; (c) a regional spread was important; and (d) the university executive boards and department's deans had to agree on participation in the study.

Within each department, the study started with collecting and analyzing relevant policy documents on organizational strategy, HRM, and TM policy to gain an understanding of the intended and formalized TM policies regarding the academic staff employed in that specific university department. Furthermore, in each department, interviews were held with key figures around HRM and TM at different levels in the organization. A total of 30 persons were interviewed: members of the university executive board and deans (eight persons), research directors and full professors managing a team of academics (eight persons), and HRM policy advisors and policy advisors from the Academic Affairs Office (14 persons). In the interviews, information was gathered on the (intended) objectives of TM, the intended and actual TM practices and activities, and obstacles in implementing TM.

Table 2. Overview of the Data Collections and the Key Elements of the Conceptual Model.

	Institutional mechanisms at sector and organizational field level	Institutional logics at sector and organizational field level	Key actors in TM and their logics	Characteristics of an organization	TM approach
Study 1: TM in Dutch universities					
1A: Explorative study					
• Literature study	X	X	X		
• Interviews (14)	X	X	X		
1B: 5 Case studies					
• Internal documents			X	X	X
• Interviews with policy advisors, top and line management (30)			X	X	X
Study 2: TM in Flemish governmental organizations					
2A: Explorative study					
• Survey HR (43 organizations)					X
• Interviews with HR managers (19)			X	X	X
2B: Four case studies					
• Interviews with HR and line managers (21)			X	X	X
2C:Interviews at the central level (6)	X	X			

Note. TM = talent management; HR = human resources.

Study 2: TM in Flemish Governmental Organizations

The second study is conducted in the departments and agencies of the policy domains of the Flemish government. In Study 2, there was not a focus on a specific group of employees (like in Study 1), and we investigated the TM practices and activities developed for all civil servants employed by the entities of the Flemish government. Data are collected through three substudies. First, an explorative study was conducted (Study 2A in Table 2), which involved a small quantitative survey and additional interviews. The survey contained five questions, with which information was gathered about the aim, scope, and practices involved in the TM approach of the entities of the Flemish government (four close-ended questions), and about the obstacles in developing and implementing a TM policy (open-ended question). The table in the appendix presents the descriptive statistics of the four close-ended questions in the questionnaire. The survey was sent out to the heads of the HR teams of 60 organizations, of whom 43 participated in the survey (response rate of 77%). Afterward, 19 in-depth interviews with HR managers (all working for entities with an implemented TM approach or concrete plans for implementing TM at short notice) were conducted to deepen our understanding of the results of the survey and to explore the factors that influenced the development of the chosen approach to TM.

Furthermore, a case study was set up in four entities (Study 2B). The selection of the cases was based on (a) the presence of a TM strategy, which was actually implemented (information about this was obtained in Study 2A); (b) a spread between departments/agencies and incorporations; and (c) the willingness to let several actors (HR managers, line managers, employees) participate in the study. In the cases, we analyzed the complete process of the development, implementation, and perception of the TM approach. Interviews with HR managers (4), line managers (in each case 4 to 5; 17 in total), and focus groups with employees (12 focus groups; a total of 64 persons) were set up to shed light on the different logics regarding the TM policy that are present in the entity.

Finally, to get information on the motives and viewpoint of the different stakeholders in developing a TM policy, we conducted a third substudy (Study 2C) in which we held in-depth interviews with policy makers at the central level of the Flemish government (three persons) and with representatives of trade unions (three persons), and analyzed policy documents in which the central policy on TM was set out. We focused on the objectives, motives, and values that underpinned the central viewpoint of the Flemish government regarding TM.

Data Analysis

All interviews in both studies were audiotape recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded (using emerging, open codes). Subsequently, we started ordering the data in line with the key elements of the model depicted in Figure 1. The quantitative data of the survey in Study 2 were analyzed with SPSS.

Results

In this section, the results from both studies are presented separately. We will start with an identification of the dominant TM approaches adopted by the organizations under study (RQ1). Subsequently, we will explore *why* the organizations in the studies have adopted either an inclusive or a segmented people management approach, and identify relevant external and internal mechanisms, actors, and logics (RQ2-RQ4). Table 3 contains an overview of the most important findings.

Results of Study 1: TM in Dutch Public Universities

The (intended) TM approach. The study showed that the university departments in Study 1 generally apply an exclusive and "hard" approach to TM, in which the well-being of the organization is well protected. Economic organizational goals are highlighted: a flexible workforce that meets the quantitative and qualitative needs of the organization and improves the efficiency of organizational processes. Earlier, we assumed that public sector organizations would also look after legitimacy, employee well-being, and societal well-being, but the data showed that these objectives are of minor importance for the university departments under study.

A wide variety of instruments and practices were developed and implemented to achieve these TM objectives. Most of them are common HR practices aimed at managing the employment relationship, with an emphasis on the selection and development of high-performing academics (by standardized selection procedures and recruitment protocols), and enhancing and controlling performance (e.g., via annual performance agreements and appraisals). The departments used different approaches for the academics at the beginning of their career and the more experienced academics. For the junior academic positions, an inclusive approach is prevalent. Yet, even within this approach, a shift from a developmental to a performance orientation occurs, because performance agreements and appraisals are gaining importance in the supervision and development of the junior staff. All junior academic staff are employed by a fixed-term contract. The TM policies for the more senior academic positions can be characterized as exclusive and "hard": Only the best performers can get tenure including the opportunities to develop toward the position of full professor. The others face an insecure future, either in a temporary academic position or as a professional outside Dutch academia. There is no TM policy for employees in a medium position with a temporary contract (researchers, lecturers).

External context—Mechanisms and logics. In recent decades, the Dutch academic organization—for example, its tasks, structure, and culture—has changed enormously, due to demographic changes, increasing internationalization and Europeanization, withdrawal of direct governmental control and funding, and the increasing involvement of external stakeholders such as funding companies and the business community (Enders, De Boer, File, Jongbloed, & Westerheijden, 2011). In particular, the changing

role of the Dutch government has had an impact on universities and their HR policy. Most Dutch universities were originally founded and controlled by the government, but since the 1980s, the direct interference and state control have decreased and institutes have obtained greater institutional autonomy. However, in return for more autonomy, the national government demanded more efficiency, cost-effectiveness, flexibility, and an entrepreneurial spirit in return (Enders et al., 2011). These NPM principles, which push public sector organizations to be run as a company (memetic mechanism), have found their way to academic HRM; increased value is attached to ranking systems to assess the results and prestige of a university and its academic staff. Practices from private sector organizations and in particular from American top universities (such as the Tenure Track system) are copied, and in these top universities, an exclusive "up-or-out" approach prevails.

In addition to these institutional mimetic and normative pressures, Dutch universities face some dominant market pressures. First, extensive competition on the (international) labor market can be marked as a relevant market pressure. All departments in Study 1 faced an aging workforce and tried to attract a new generation of academics for the vacant positions of full professor. For three out of five faculties (law, STEM, medical sciences), this was problematic because they were confronted with a highly competitive, tight, and (inter)national labor market, and they experienced difficulties in attracting and retaining talents. The other two faculties did not experience difficulties in recruiting new staff and even had to cope with plentiful junior staff who have limited internal career possibilities due to low mobility in the upper ranks.

A second relevant market pressure concerns the increased competition for research funding. The Dutch government has lowered the direct and structural research funding of the institutes, and as a result universities and particularly individual scholars have to get additional funding for their research projects via personal grants. However, the competition to get a grant is fierce, and only the academics with the best track record are eligible to get a grant.

The internal context—Organizational characteristics and logics. The developments, mechanisms, and actors in the external context all pushed the Dutch university departments to incorporate the market-managerial logic in their TM and underline the exclusive and hard approach. This is consolidated by the circumstances in the internal context: The workforce composition, the lack of (opportunities for) upward mobility, internal budgetary constraints, and organizational culture have had a significant impact on the motives for the TM approach. We will discuss them below.

A dominant factor of influence is the workforce composition in the university departments and the internal career possibilities for academic staff. To respond to the expansion and marketization of HE, university management seeks to obtain a flexible workforce composition which makes it possible to react rapidly to external and internal developments. Since the early 1990s, the group of employees with a permanent

contract has declined, while the group of employees with a fixed-term or part-time contract increased enormously. This also becomes apparent in the five case studies; in all departments, nearly 75% to 80% of the academic staff is in a junior and medior academic position, and the majority has a temporary contract. The possibilities for junior and medior academic staff to move to a tenured senior position are limited, because there are not enough positions available (ca. 15% of positions is a senior position, being associate or full professor), even when the aforementioned need to replace the retiring "baby boom professors" is taken into account. As a result, this large portion of flexible contracts offers the organization room to select and hire only the best performing academics on a permanent basis. Interestingly, in three out of the five cases, some interviewees (HR, top management) mention the collective labor agreement, the Dutch labor law, and the role of the obligatory Employees Council as hindering, coercive mechanisms enhancing bureaucracy and blocking further organizational flexibility.

Second, the faculties are confronted with the aforementioned cutbacks in government funding and therefore have to find other external financial means (national and international grants). As the competition for this funding is fierce, some departments even have faced a weakened financial position which forced the dean to take economy measures. An HR-specialist argues how this affects the TM approach:

> We do not have many senior positions available, and we do not have the money to create new positions. . . . The financial means are becoming more scarce, so the decision about who gets what has become more important. (HR policy official)

Some departments have made the acquisition of external funding part of the performance criteria and performance agreements of talents (medical sciences), or invested in coaching programs for academics in writing a grant proposal (social sciences). All in all, these examples highlight again the market-managerial logic in academic TM.

A third factor of influence is the academic organizational culture. This culture highlights the professional logic, in which traditional professional norms such as autonomy, creativity, excellence, and the trust in the academic community are accentuated. As we will argue below, the professional logic dominant in organizational culture is closely related to the excellence and performance orientation in the market-bureaucratic logic. In the next section, we will discuss the impact of the academic community and its interrelated professional logics on the TM approach.

Key actors in TM and their use of logics. Within Dutch academia, three groups play a significant role in developing a TM strategy: (a) top management and HR-specialists at the university level, (b) top management (dean and vice dean) and HR-specialists at the department level, and (c) professors in their role of line managers. The universities' top management (i.e., executive board) and the central HR staff usually play a supporting role regarding the TM approach and activities within

the university; the central TM approach is more advisory than compulsory. The interviews with these actors show that for both, a market-managerial logic is prevalent. In all cases, the departments had the room to develop an own TM approach that fits the internal and external circumstances of the department. The departmental TM policy is often developed in cooperation between department's top (i.e., dean) and middle (i.e., professors) management and HR-specialists. Analogous to the actors at the university level, all actors in the departmental dominant coalition have adopted at least the market-managerial logic: "To improve our competitive advantage we need to recruit eminent scientists" (HR-representative).

HR representatives also highlight the importance of transparency, and the need for protocols and agreements to increase the likelihood of a fair and just treatment for all staff. Their reasoning and activities reflect the legislatic-bureaucratic logic. Yet, the HR-department has little influence on strategic decision making in academia, and academics still consider the management and development of academic staff as their core responsibility and accept little interference. As a result, the legislatic-bureaucratic logic of the HR-specialists did not have a significant effect on the choice for an inclusive or an exclusive approach, but did affect the formalization of the TM policies in terms of formal and transparent agreements, protocols, and practices. Our data indeed show that top and middle management protest against the bureaucratic role and impact of HR, and claim that to attract and retain top academics, one needs to set aside formal rules.

The top and middle managers within a university department all stem from the academic staff. As a result, we see that these actors have incorporated both the market-managerial logic and the professional logic. The interviews even point to the interrelatedness of the market-managerial logic and the professional logic of the academics. In the professional logic, we notice a strong emphasis on excellence, not driven by external targets such as in the market-managerial logic but by intrinsic motivation. "Scientists have high performance standards for themselves. They are very driven to excel in their work" (policy advisor). This drive is an essential feature of academic culture. In one of the interviews, a professor remarks, "Every academic has the drive to become a professor. . . . If you do not believe that you're a gifted academic, a talent, you had better quit. You will not survive the competition" (full professor). This combination of logics mainly affects the TM objectives and underlying values regarding TM, and pushes the organizations toward an exclusive approach focusing on a select group of well-performing academics. Moreover, academics as professionals do not necessarily dislike regulations and protocols, but are only willing to conform to them when they are developed by their own professional community, and related to the rituals and ceremonies that go together with that community. The data show that this mechanism is incorporated in academic TM policy, because the academic community is ascribed a crucial role in implementing the intended TM policies and practices, such as the active involvement of scholars in selecting new hires via a selection committee.

Table 3. Overview of Key Findings.

	Study 1: Dutch universities	Study 2: Flemish government
TM approach	• Exclusive talent definition: Excellent scholars • Objectives: Organizational well-being prevails • Practices: Emphasis on people practices, mainly enhancing and controlling performance	• Inclusive talent definition: All employees • Objectives: Both organizational and employee well-being (employee well-being is considered to be a mean to achieve organizational well-being) • Practices: Both performance and development oriented, both people and work practices
External context		
Institutional pressures	• The influence of Dutch government, although indirectly involved, is still strong. Focus on principles of the NPM (reflecting market-managerial logic; mimetic mechanism) • Normative mechanism: Strong orientation toward the national and international academic community	• Politicians are a dominant actor (focus on NPM principles, reflecting market-managerial logic; mimetic mechanism) • Coercive mechanism: Strict regulations regarding employment relationship and HRM
Market pressures	• Extensive competition on the (inter)national academic labor market to attract and retain excellent academics • Decline in research budgets and an increasing competition to get personal grants	• Weakened position of governmental organizations as an attractive employer • General budgetary constraints (which limit the possibilities to attract new employees)
Internal context		

Characteristics of an organization	• Workforce
	  • Aging workforce, need for more efficiency
	  • Large portion of temporary staff
	  • Few possibilities for vertical mobility
	• Internal financial cutbacks/ budgetary constraints
	• Organizational culture of excellence and competition
		• Reforms in organizational strategy and task, and the need for more efficiency and flexibility
		• Large portion of staff with permanent contracts
		• Organizational culture of equality

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

	Study 1: Dutch universities	Study 2: Flemish government
Key actors and logics	• Dominant coalition at university level: Executive board and HR (both in advisory role) • Dominant coalition at department level: Dean, HR, and line management. Regarding managing academic staff, the academic community is in the lead and HR has a supporting role • All actors demonstrate the market-managerial logic • Top and middle management also adopted the professional logic; HR reflects the legislatic-bureaucratic logic	• Top management and HR: HR has a strong, strategic influence • Dominant logics in entities: Market-managerial and legislatic-bureaucratic • All actors demonstrate the market-managerial logic. Top management and HR also have adopted the legislatic-bureaucratic logic

Note. TM = talent management; NPM = New Public Management; HRM = human resource management; HR = human resources.

Results of Study 2: TM in Flemish Governmental Organizations

The (intended) TM approach. In 2012, the Flemish government developed a TM guideline that reflects the viewpoint of the *central* government. In this document, an inclusive approach to TM is chosen. The focus on the talents and strengths of all employees is accompanied by the emphasis that a match between individual and organizational goals should be strived for via the TM policy:

> Talent is the combination of doing something good and doing something you like to do. . . . For developing talent, the right context, support and a proper fit with individual, societal and organizational goals is necessary. In this context the Flemish government has to be a good example for other organizations. (Flemish Government, 2012, p. 9)

As every entity of the Flemish government has discretionary power to develop and implement its own HR policy, this central guideline on the approach to talent and TM is mere advisory. The case study research (Study 2B), however, shows that the TM approach within the four selected entities corresponds with the central inclusive viewpoint. Both employee well-being and organizational well-being are strived for. Yet, the strategic organizational goals (cf. flexibility, efficiency, and employability within the organization) seem to be more dominant, and employee well-being (satisfaction, engagement, employability) is regarded as a stepping stone to achieve this. This is supported by data from the questionnaire (see the table in the appendix) and interviews with HR managers (Study 2A).

As presumed in the theoretical framework, the inclusive TM in this study is rather situated in the soft- and developmental-oriented HRM. The quantitative and qualitative

data of Studies 2A and 2B reveal that a focus on developmental practices is dominant but also combined with performance-aimed practices (cf. planning and evaluation). However, all activities in the entities are based on a strength-based approach (cf. Meyers, van, & Woerkom, 2014). In this regard, we point to (a) the identification of strengths, (b) the matching of these strengths with the organizational needs, (c) the employment of strengths of employees within the work context, as well as (d) the development of strengths within the organizational context. Below, we will demonstrate that several contextual factors (cf. the context of NPM and change, budgetary constraints, and the rigid statutory personnel rules) triggered the development of an inclusive TM policy.

External context—Mechanisms and logics. When analyzing the external context of the Flemish government, we distinguish institutional as well as market pressures which bring the market-managerial logic to the fore in the Flemish government. We will start with the institutional pressures. In 2006, the Flemish government underwent a thorough reform, of which the roots trace back to principles of the NPM movement. This reform was called "Better Administrative Policy" (cf. Beter Bestuurlijk Beleid [BBB]). In this reform, techniques and principles specific to the private sector were transposed to the Flemish government (cf. management autonomy). As a consequence, the legitimacy of the organization is evaluated via a result-oriented mind-set in which the values of effectiveness, efficiency, and economy are put forward. From this mimetic mechanism, we expect that the market-managerial logic will play an important role in the policy and decision-making process. The assumption that this will push public sector organizations toward an exclusive and hard TM approach does not hold, as we have illustrated above, for the Flemish governmental organizations. The data illustrate that coercive mechanisms give counterbalance, particularly the rigid bundle of rules and procedures that shape the employment relationship of civil servants in the Flemish government. The HR-specialists in the case studies indicate that it is difficult to increase the flexibility and mobility of the workforce—which are TM objectives in the entities—when contracts cannot be changed or terminated because of the strict procedures of the statutory. This coercive mechanism reflects the legislatic-bureaucratic logic and triggered a focus on strengths of all employees as in an inclusive approach.

Although the NPM movement is an institutional pressure, it created a context of change that can be connected to market pressures as well. We consider the adjustment of a public sector organization's role to the constellation of the market as a direct consequence of the market dynamic. In this way, the market influences the mission, role, and tasks a public sector organization takes up. We stress, however, that political choices also stem from values that ascend from the underlying ideological beliefs. An interplay of institutional and market pressures is thus apparent, and, as with the external developments in Study 1, we come to the conclusion that both prioritize the market-managerial logic.

Another market pressure is related to the external labor market. The weakened position as an attractive employer for highly educated employees was enhanced by governmental budgetary constraints, following from the 2008 financial crisis. These constraints put a limit to the opportunity to recruit and select employees on the external labor market. Furthermore, the Flemish government imposed, from 2013 onward, a reduction of 6.5% of the workforce. This resulted in a strict surveillance of the

personnel budget in the entities of the Flemish government and put the dominant market-managerial logic central in the HR policy.

However, despite the fact that market pressures and institutional pressures toward NPM promote the market-managerial logic, the coercive mechanism of rigid personnel rules combined with the economy measures regarding the personnel budget pushed the Flemish governmental organizations toward the adoption of an inclusive approach ("every employee needs to be more employable and flexible").

The internal context—Organizational characteristics and logics. The internal context of the entities in Study 2 had a determining role in the choice for an inclusive TM approach. First, the constitution of the workforce was a factor of influence. All entities in the studies had a large portion of permanent staff whose employment position was well protected due to the strict statutory employment rules. Three out of the four entities were confronted with imposed changes in their mission and organizational structure, and felt the strategic need for employable and flexible employees. As the rigid statutory employment rules and the budgetary constraints limited the possibility to recruit and select externally for appropriate employees, this strategic priority needs to be solved within the organization with the present staff.

Furthermore, the importance attached to value of equality in organizational culture—as is reflected in the legislatic-bureaucratic logic—is described as an explanation for the choice of the inclusive approach. For one entity, this "change" context was not apparent. In this case, the choice for an inclusive approach is embedded in the organizational culture with its focus on "professionality" and "positivity" (e.g., "Our organization starts from the positive characteristics of every employee, every partner, every family, and every child").

Key actors in TM and their use of logics. In general, we distinguish three central actors who influenced the development of the intended TM policy in the Flemish government: the political mandatories, the top civil servants, and the HR-specialists. The politicians in Study 2 mainly focused on the budgetary constraints and the efficient functioning of the organization, and emphasized the importance of employable and flexible employees in the central TM approach. The market-managerial logic of the politicians thus signifies a crucial influence on the development of the TM policy. The interviews with top managers and HR-specialists within the four case studies show that these two actors also have adopted the market-managerial logic. They highlight the importance of increasing employability of employees and the necessity of a cost-conscious HR approach, as is reflected in the TM objectives.

The choice for an inclusive approach, however, also resulted from the legislatic-bureaucratic logic held by top managers and HR. The fit with organizational culture in the public sector—often described as the value of equal access to developmental opportunities—is part of the motivation for the inclusive approach. Finally, we have identified a possible indirect influence of the trade unions. In the interviews with representatives, the inclusive approach was promoted through the public sector's exemplary role: "In the end, we deliver public service, we make use of tax income. Everyone should have equal access as well as equal chances. I believe that is what a public sector organization stands for" (trade union representative).

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of the article was to increase our understanding of how public sector organizations conceptualize and shape their TM approach, and to identify the underlying mechanisms and logics affecting the possible different motives for the adoption of an inclusive or a more segmented approach to people management in the public sector. We come to the conclusion that TM is highly contextual, because both the organizational internal and external context affect the intended TM strategy, including the actors involved in TM. This article is among the first to explore conceptually and empirically the influence of institutional logics on the different aspects of intended TM approach, and as such provides some new directions for future TM research.

First, although the (classic) characteristics of the public sector—which accentuates an equal treatment of all employees—would make an inclusive approach more likely (Boselie et al., 2011), we have found variations in the people management approaches in the public sector organizations under study. The TM approach of the entities of the Flemish government is, indeed, inclusive and developmental, aiming to achieve both organizational and employee well-being. By contrast, the Dutch public university departments have adopted a more exclusive and performance-oriented TM approach with a focus on organizational objectives. We come to the conclusion that the TM approach is not purely based on ideological beliefs, but multiple factors in the organizational context affect the intended TM strategy.

This brings us to our second aim of the article. We see that—in line with the NPM principles—in both subsectors, organizations reformed their organization to be more flexible and efficient, and TM is perceived as a mean to support these changes. This, however, does not prove to be a significant reason to explain the divergence in TM policy. Market pressures resulting from the external labor market (and the position as an employer on that market) and budgetary constraints, as well as institutional pressures (coercive mechanisms in the Flemish organizations and normative mechanisms in the Dutch university departments)—reflecting to market-managerial, legislatic-bureaucratic, and professional logics, respectively—have an effect as well. Moreover, as Greenwood et al. (2011) predict, "attributes" of the organization filter the institutional logics. In our study, the composition of the workforce combined with internal economy measures can be an explanation for choosing a specific TM approach. But most of all, organizational culture seems to be crucial. In the Flemish entities, equality is highly valued, which is line with the legislatic-bureaucratic logic. By contrast, the organizational culture of Dutch academia is mainly based on the professional values of the academics and emphasizes excellence and competition. The influence of organizational culture, in particular cultural fit, has been mentioned by several TM scholars (e.g., Kontoghiorghes, 2016; Stahl et al., 2012). Yet, we have seen that the influence of organizational culture cannot be separated from the logics adopted by the actors in the dominant coalition (Greenwood et al., 2011). This is an important theoretical contribution of the article. The impact of belief systems has been mentioned by Meyers and Van Woerkom (2014) and Nijs, Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, and Sels (2013) but not yet studied in empirical TM research. However, the analysis of the empirical data points out that the mechanisms, actors, and logics are entangled, and

not easy to separate. To really understand what happens in practice and why, we have proven that it is relevant to take the impact of both mechanisms and relevant stakeholders (and their logics) into account. To increase our understanding of TM, we therefore recommend more contextually based research such as multilevel studies in which the perceptions of multiple actors are considered.

Third, a central debate in the TM literature concerns the inclusive versus exclusive interpretation of talent, because the interpretation of talent is crucial for the design of the TM approach (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013; Meyers & Van Woerkom, 2014). Yet, we have shown that the conceptualization of TM is not only related to the definition of talent but also to the operationalization of the TM objectives, in other words, "talent for what?" In particular, the TM objectives, which seem to arise from demands and constraints in the external and internal context, seem to be a determinant for the TM practices (either developmental or performance oriented). However, the relationship between the TM objectives and the TM practices needs further exploration in empirical research. Moreover, corresponding to remarks of scholars like Thornton and Ocasio (2008), the data show that the dominant logics present in the organization affect different aspects of TM. For example, the market-managerial logics mostly affected the TM objectives, while the legislatic-bureaucratic or professional logics have had an impact on either the definition of talent and/or the TM practices. However, this needs further exploration. We recommend more research on which specific logics are present in public sector organizations and how they affect the systems and processes of the organization.

Fourth, the article illustrates that both subsectors are subject to multiple logics which are in part corresponding and in part conflicting (Currie & Spyridonidis, 2015; Dunn & Jones, 2010; Greenwood et al., 2011). The data show that in all cases, key actors display the market-managerial logic and therefore emphasize the importance of flexibility and efficiency via the TM objectives. However, in the Flemish organizations, top management and HR also have adopted the legislatic-bureaucratic logic, which supports an inclusive approach. In the Dutch university, the professional logic is the second dominant logic, in particular in the reasoning of top and line management, and therefore excellence and competition has found its way in their TM approach. In Study 1, the academics are what Currie and Spyridonidis (2015) call the higher status actors. The limited impact of the legislatic-bureaucratic logic of the HRM staff in Dutch university confirms the findings of Bévort and Poulfelt (2015) on conflicting logics in professional service firms.

Finally, in this article, we focused on three logics. When analyzing the data, we noticed that the market-managerial logic and the legislatic-bureaucratic logic consisted of two subsets of logics (market vs. managerial logic; legislatic vs. bureaucratic logic). Furthermore, as Currie and Spyridonidis (2015) claim, the logics are not purely conflicting but appear to be intertwined and even supporting each other: The market logic seems to be related to the professional logics of the Dutch academics, and the managerial logic to the legislatic logic of the public service workers in the Flemish government. As we hypothesized in the theoretical framework, the research indicates that the origins of the key employees—being public service works or classic professionals such as the academics—have a significant impact on organizational culture and on the logics dominant in the organization (Greenwood et al., 2011; Thornton et al., 2005).

This article also has some limitations. As we already mentioned in the theoretical framework, this article focuses on the intended TM practices. According to the HR process model of Wright and Nishii (2013), HR practices are often not implemented as intended, which causes variation in the implementation process and can hinder the effectiveness of the TM approach. Vandenabeele et al. (2013) explain this variance by the continuous and direct impact of factors in the context of public sector organizations on all stages of the HRM process. The interviews in both studies—and also additional data on the employees' perceptions which are not included in this article—point to a difference between the intended, actual, and perceived TM policy, and that in the actual TM practice, different mechanisms and logics seem to be dominant, particularly because other actors than those in the dominant coalition are involved in implementing TM. Because of the focus of the article on the intended strategy, we did not include these data. To increase our understanding of what actually happens in practice, and why, we recommend more research on the impact of mechanisms and logics on the complete TM process.

In this article, we compare two subsectors that are situated in the Benelux. We are aware that the differences between the subsectors and between the two countries (with divergent cultures, legislation and law systems, and so on) is a limitation. The number of cases within each study was limited to explain within-country differences regarding the TM approach. More research on the impact of mechanisms and logics within countries is required. Also the focus on sector- and organizational-field-level factors of influence can be seen as a limitation. We did not focus intensively on explaining differences between the organizations under study. A more detailed investigation on the contextual factors at the sector level is required.

Finally, we found within the Dutch universities different TM approaches regarding junior academic staff (inclusive and developmental/performance oriented), senior staff (exclusive and performance TM orientation), and academics in medium positions (no TM policy at all). In the words of Lepak and Snell (1999), they have adopted a differentiated HR architecture. According to Lepak and Snell, this architecture is based on the value and uniqueness of the human capital function, but our research indicates that also other external factors can play a role. Yet, we have not explored this into detail. As this differentiation within a TM strategy, as well as the rationale behind it, is hardly explored in empirical research, we call up for further research in organizations that have adopted a "hybrid" form of TM.

The study also has practical implications. The data support our statement that TM is not an instrumental, rational, and independent process. Although key actors in the dominant coalition take notice of the contextual factors, TM also proves to be an intuitive and micropolitical process. Therefore, this article highlights the importance of an institutional and organizational fit, but in particular the significance of a consistent "talent mindset" embedded in organizational culture and leadership style (see also Kontoghiorghes, 2016; Stahl et al., 2012). We think that it is necessary for HR and managers in practice to show consideration for the potential impact of "tangible" mechanisms such as labor market pressures and economy measures but also to be more aware of the influence of personal beliefs and logics regarding talent and how to deal with those mechanisms and logics in the decision process. This is what Thornton and Ocasio (2008) call "embedded agency."

Several studies (e.g., Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014; Nijs et al., 2013; Powell et al., 2012) have shown that ambiguity about the interpretation of talent and about the outcomes of TM results in frictions and tensions which can hinder effective TM implementation. We therefore stress the importance of a more open debate in the organization about the (beliefs and underlying assumptions regarding the) scope and aim of the TM approach. We also advise active involvement of middle and line managers in that debate, as well as in the development of the intended TM approach—for example, by including representatives of middle and line managers in the dominant coalition—so their beliefs and concerns regarding TM can be considered from the beginning. This will support a better fit between the intended and actual practices, and subsequently have a positive effect on the effectiveness of the TM approach.

Appendix

Overview of Findings Survey, Study 2A (Total Response = 43 Organizations).

Topic	%	Topic	%
Development stage of TM		Practices involved	
• No TM approach at all	9 (*n* = 4)	• Recruitment and selection	47 (*n* = 21)
• Willingness to develop TM activities	42 (*n* = 18)	• Attraction and retention	44 (*n* = 20)
• Concrete plans for implementation	23 (*n* = 10)	• Talent audit	24 (*n* = 11)
• TM activities are actually implemented	21 (*n* = 9)	• Job rotation, job enrichment, and so on	56 (*n* = 25)
• TM activities are implemented and evaluated	5 (*n* = 2)	• Engagement and commitment	64 (*n* = 29)
Scope of TM approach		• Performance management	64 (*n* = 29)
• Inclusive	56 (*n* = 24)	• Remuneration	36 (*n* = 16)
• Exclusive	5 (*n* = 2)	• Training and development	64 (*n* = 29)
• Hybrid	5 (*n* = 2)	• Career management	53 (*n* = 24)
• Don't know	5 (*n* = 2)	• Management development	49 (*n* = 22)
• Does not apply	30 (*n* = 13)		
Intended TM objectives			
• Increasing employee's employability for the benefit of the organization	91 (*n* = 38)		
• Enhancing employee satisfaction	79 (*n* = 33)		
• Increasing productivity	71 (*n* = 30)		

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

Topic	%	Topic	%
• Being an attractive employer	64 (*n* = 27)		
• Improving service	64 (*n* = 27)		
• Increasing employee's employability on internal labor market	21 (*n* = 9)		
• Increasing employee's employability on external labor market	10 (*n* = 4)		

Note. TM = talent management.

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