

Examining Talent Management Practices in a Canadian Not-for-Profit Context: A Theory-Driven Template Analysis

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Article abstract

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Examining Talent Management Practices in a Canadian Not-for-Profit Context: A Theory-Driven Template Analysis

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Summary

Despite significant interest in the field of talent management (TM), research has been largely confined to talent management in large corporations. Recent reviews have identified two significant gaps in the literature: 1) excessive focus on large for-profit organizations in North American, Asian and European private sectors; and 2) lack of consensus on TM definitions and activities in organizations. This article examines how TM is perceived and practised in a Canadian context. We used a theory-based approach and drew on previous conceptualizations of TM to examine the perspectives of 30 Canadian decision-makers. Using a conceptual model based on Bolander, Werr, and Asplund (2017), we observed that non-profit organization (NPO) decision-makers have a unique inclusive and competitive view of TM. Their view is defined predominantly by humanistic (acquired talent, inclusive, inputs and outputs) and competitive factors (recruitment dependence and skill development). They felt that talent should be inclusive and acquired, and many indicated that they were looking for people who could be trained. Their emphasis was on cultural fit, motivation and ability to grow intellectually and professionally, rather than on just acquiring the key skills needed for certain roles. The results indicate that TM is an organizational activity and needs to be understood and supported by the whole organization. Specifically, an inclusive view of TM requires adaptable organizational systems, such as collective agreements and accounting systems, which record how value is created in the organization. Future research could compare and contrast the views of those undertaking other functions in the organization, such as accounting, with the views of HR managers.

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profit decision-makers. Results show that Canadian decision-makers have a unique inclusive and competitive view of TM. Their view is defined predominantly by humanistic (acquired talent, inclusive, input and output) and competitive factors (reliance on recruitment and skill development). This study contributes a new perspective by providing empirical insights from managers of Canadian enterprises and pointing to implications for broader discussion, conceptualization and practice in the field.

Keywords: humanistic talent management; talent development; Canada; organizational nature; inclusive; competitive; nonprofit

Résumé

Malgré la reconnaissance de l'importance du capital humain pour le succès des organisations sans but lucratif (OSBL), les recherches existantes se sont principalement concentrées sur la gestion des talents dans les grandes entreprises. Cet article examine la façon dont la gestion des talents est perçue et pratiquée dans le contexte canadien en mettant l'accent sur les OSBL. Nous adoptons une approche fondée sur la théorie et nous nous appuyons sur les conceptualisations précédentes de la gestion des talents pour examiner les perspectives de 30 décideurs canadiens. En utilisant une analyse du modèle basée sur le cadre théorique de Bolander, Werr et Asplund (2017), nous observons que les décideurs des OSBL ont une vision unique de la gestion des talents qui est à la fois inclusive et compétitive. Ils incarnent un type principalement humaniste (talent acquis, inclusif, intrants et extrants) avec des facteurs de type concurrentiel (dépendance au recrutement et développement des compétences). Les participants suggèrent que le talent devrait être inclusif et acquis, et beaucoup ont indiqué qu'ils recherchent des personnes capables d'être formées. L'accent est mis sur l'adéquation culturelle, la motivation et la compétence de se développer intellectuellement et professionnellement, plutôt que seulement acquérir les habiletés clés nécessaires pour certains rôles. Cette étude apporte une nouvelle optique canadienne en fournissant des aperçus empiriques de gestionnaires d'entreprises sans but lucratif. En fait, cette étude apporte une plus grande discussion de la conceptualisation et la pratique dans ce domaine.

Mots-clés: Gestion humaniste du talent; Développement et formation du talent; Formation inclusive; Organismes sans but lucratifs; Organismes à but non lucratif; Canada; vision inclusive et compétitive de la formation

Introduction

Chambers et al. (1998) view talent management (TM) as competitive in nature and indicate that the need for superior talent is increasing. The premise that better TM improves competitive advantage, combined with worldwide reports of talent supply issues, has generated significant interest in the field of TM among academics and practitioners (McDonnell, Collings, Mellahi, and Schuler, 2017). This interest in TM has been amplified recently by shifting demographics, specifically an ageing labour force, declining birth rates in developed economies and the emergence of globalization (Schuler et al., 2016). It is argued that employers can use TM to allocate their resources and attention more optimally to staff positions that differentially contribute to organizational performance (Thunnissen, 2016) and competitiveness (Bolander, Werr, and Asplund, 2017). Collings and Mellahi (2009) define TM as:

Activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions that 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

This definition stresses the need to differentiate between different positions and define how they create value for the organization, while distinguishing TM from HR practices. In line with this definition, one must systematically identify how employees create value in the organization and implement practices that support talented employees. Empirical research has adopted this view. Indeed, examination of TM practices is a means to create high-performance workplace practices and is a central topic in the industrial relations literature (Frost, 2008).

Bolander et al. (2017) conducted a comparative study of the TM practices of 30 organizations based in Sweden. They identified four distinct TM types that exist in practice and identified how specific practices are shaped for each type (see Figure 1). The four TM types are humanistic, competitive, elitist and entrepreneurial. According to the same authors, employers view talent through the lens of subjective vs. objective, inclusive vs. exclusive, innate vs. acquired and input vs. output.

Evidently, TM practices differ by industry, size and culture (Bolander et al., 2017). Studying them in different contexts creates novel insights and a deeper understanding of their underlying principles (Muratbekova-Touron et al., 2018). Such studies have been conducted in countries worldwide, including Brazil, Russia, India, China, Poland and the Gulf states (Muratbekova-Touron et al., 2018).

Countries are shaped by historical events, and so is TM. For example, post-communist countries often have customs that limit objective identification and advancement of high potential (Skuzza, Scullion, and McDonnell, 2013). A case in point is the Soviet legacy of underdeveloped HRM practices and the slow pace of TM implementation in Russian organizations (Muratbekova-Touron et al., 2018). This mindset has triggered idiosyncratic TM understandings, including a significant focus on exclusive and performance-oriented

approaches (Muratbekova-Touron et al., 2018). In Russia, there is also a deep-rooted perception that age and length of service should determine organizational advancement (Muratbekova-Touron et al., 2018). In Poland, TM studies indicate the importance of informal relationships and private networks (Skuzza et al., 2013). These traditional practices will likely evolve as China, Russia, Poland and similar countries develop into more open market economies (McDonnell et al., 2017; Laaksonen, 1988).

TM is also shaped by local legislation. For example, the Chinese government enacted preferential policies in the late 1970s to help develop coastal regions (Shi and Handfield, 2012). However, those policies increased inequalities and created distortions that caused top talent to migrate to developed cities where there were better job prospects, living conditions and learning opportunities (Shi and Handfield, 2012). Similarly, by introducing policies to replace foreign employees with local workers (Sidani and Al Ariss, 2014), the Gulf Cooperation Council has hindered effective talent recruitment and development (Sidani and Al Ariss, 2014).

National governments can use legislation to help attract talent. For example, the Russian legal environment has labour and tax laws that produce favourable conditions for younger employees (Muratbekova-Touron et al., 2018). Wages paid to students on trainee contracts are exempt from social insurance tax, unlike regular employee earnings (Muratbekova-Touron et al., 2018).

TM is furthermore shaped by language. The literature reveals an overreliance on English in international talent recruitment, and the word "talent" may have multiple meanings and uses in other languages (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, and González-Cruz, 2013). For example, the Russian word for talent means "gift" and implies that talent is inborn and associated with the arts and not with organizational activities (Muratbekova-Touron et al., 2018). The Chinese view on talent stems from Confucian values and embodies the idea that 'all are low-brow activities, except education' (Cooke et al., 2014). Therefore, in China, talent is synonymous with being well-educated. This view causes resources to be focused on those who perform well, are highly educated and have high potential (Cooke et al., 2014). In the Chinese collectivist culture, satisfaction is derived less from task competence than from a sense of contribution to a group effort (Scarborough, 1998). It is worth noting that these cultural attributes primarily impact interpersonal relationships rather than business content (Laaksonen, 1988). A manager is thus expected to be an expert in cultural differences (Scarborough, 1988).

English is accepted as the official language of business. This state of affairs impedes talent identification because the best performers may not be fluent in English (McDonnell et al., 2017). In countries such as China, where English language skills are required for employees in global corporations (Hewlett and Rashid, 2011), retaining talent is difficult as individuals who can speak English and possess an understanding of Western business practices are relatively rare and often have alternative job options (Shi and Handfield, 2012).

These historical, linguistic and cultural differences may partly explain two significant gaps that recent reviews have identified in the TM literature: 1) excessive focus on large for-profit organizations in the private sectors of North America, Asia and Europe; and 2) lack of consensus on TM definitions and activities in organizations.

With respect to the first gap, greater understanding of TM should be developed beyond the large, multinational corporations of North American, Asian (specifically Chinese and Indian) and European private sectors (McDonnell et al., 2017; Thunnissen, 2016). Empirical work should be expanded to other contexts and cultures, including non-profit organizations (Meyers and Van Woerkom, 2014). TM is understood differently in different contexts, be it

the macro environment, the organization or the individual (Muratbekova-Touron, Kabalina, and Festing, 2018). For example, the labour market, the legal environment and higher education affect how talent is viewed and practised (Muratbekova-Touron et al., 2018; Thunnissen, 2016).

The second gap in the TM literature is the current lack of consensus on TM definitions and activities in organizations (Jayaraman, Talib, and Khan, 2018). The field of TM is still maturing, and to reach maturity it will need a shared paradigm (McDonnell et al., 2017). This paradigm creation will partly require determining whether TM is truly different from human resource management (HRM) or whether it is simply “old wine in the new bottle” (Cooke, Saini, and Wang, 2014, p.214). Indeed, how TM is viewed and practised affects how the employment relationship is enacted.

Our study aims to address these two gaps by looking at how TM is viewed and practised in a Canadian context with a focus on non-profit small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in Ontario, Canada. Although previous studies have recognized the importance of human capital for the success of NPOs, they have primarily focused on TM in large for-profit enterprises. Furthermore, research on how NPOs practise TM is scarce, and the few existing papers are mostly conceptual discussions of the topic (e.g., Krishnan and Scullion, 2017).

We will contribute to this discussion by considering the adoption of TM practices by those who are responsible for human resources management (HRM) within organizations in Ontario. We will also contribute to the TM literature, which has focused on for-profit multinationals in the U.S. (Collings, Scullion and Vaiman, 2011). While some efforts have been made to examine TM in the public sector (Glenn, 2012; Thunnissen, 2016) and in European settings (Collings, Scullion and Vaiman, 2011), there are significant gaps in the research outside U.S. for-profit organizations. For example, little research has been done on TM in Canadian and non-profit settings. In this study, we will provide insights from Ontario-based managers and thus help explain the presence of isomorphism in TM practices in Canadian organizations.

We will focus on managers, as DiMaggio and Powell (1983:156) identify professionalization as a source of isomorphic organizational change. Professionals follow the normative assumptions of their profession, which they acquire while earning various credentials, taking graduate training programs or participating in professional and trade associations. According to DiMaggio and Powell, the higher the degree of professionalization within a field, the higher will be the likelihood of field-level change. Professionals occupy powerful positions within their organizations and organizational fields (Hwang and Powell, 2005; Scott, 2008). They transform themselves and influence change within organizational fields (e.g., Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005) by developing new modes of professional practice (Anand et al., 2007).

Institutional theory explains why organizations adopt similar practices that may not even be rational. For example, organizations may manage their relationships with their employees in similar ways because of normative pressures (Zbaracki, 1998). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) observed that mythical forms of rational employee management disseminate quickly throughout an organizational field and result in high degrees of structural similarity or isomorphism among organizations that interact with each other frequently. Given the critical role of HR decision-makers in adopting and disseminating HRM practices or in creating, maintaining and transforming HRM institutions (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006), we interviewed HR decision-makers to identify how TM is viewed and practised in Canada.

In the next section, we will outline our methodology and our conceptual framework of TM, based on Bolander et al. (2017). We will then introduce a theory-driven design of data collection and template analysis. The Results section will present the data coding and refinement of the study's conceptual framework. Finally, we will conclude and propose avenues for further research.

1. Method

To gain insight into the TM views of managers, we conducted 30 interviews with TM decision-makers in Ontario firms. We examined whether their views are aligned with an existing conceptual framework of TM (O'Mahoney and Vincent, 2014).

Bolander et al. (2017) studied the TM practices of 30 organizations based in Sweden. They identified four distinct types in use and how specific practices had developed differently within each type (See Figure 1). The four TM types are humanistic, competitive, elitist and entrepreneurial. Each of them is used to classify how employers view talent and practise TM. How employers view talent is classified as either subjective or objective, inclusive or exclusive, innate or acquired and input or output.

Bolander, Werr, and Asplund (2017) investigated TM views and practices and developed a framework that is suitable for our study.

Figure 1

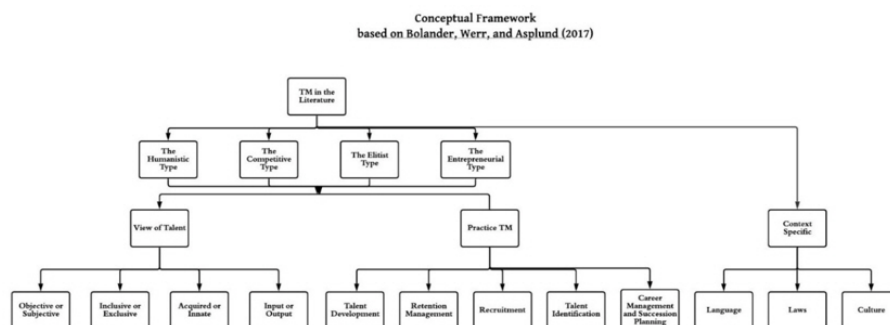
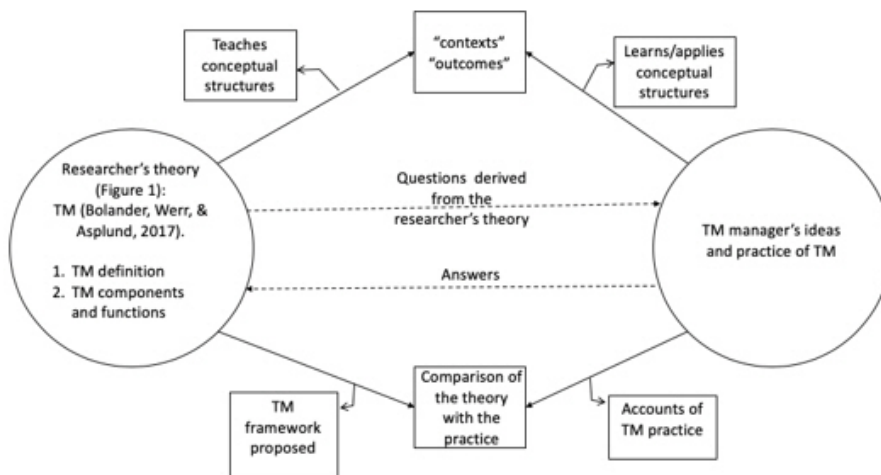


Figure 2 presents the operationalization of the theory-driven interviews for this study. The arrows indicate the flow of the interview questions and how the interviewer interacts with the interviewee. We followed Pawson (1996) and Pawson and Tilley (1997) who developed a 'theory-driven' approach to interviewing in which the subject of the interview is the researcher's theory rather than the informant's 'thoughts and deeds.' We used the interview data to confirm whether the TM decision-makers understood and practised the TM practices of the conceptual framework (Pawson, 1996). The conceptual framework in Figure 1 guided our questions, which, for example, focused on the definition of talent in the workforce, on inclusive/exclusive views, and on innate/acquired outlooks. We inquired about the practices by asking questions about retention, recruitment, development, talent identification, career

management and succession planning. The interview protocol included such questions as "Are you able to get the right people, in the right place/role, at the right time? Why?" and "Should talent management include all employees or a specific subset of key people? Why?" and probing questions that included "Who would be included or excluded?" The arrows in Figure 2 indicate the theory-driven and data-driven analysis of the interviews.

Figure 2

Theory-driven interview, from Pawson (1996)



Based on theoretical relevance, we used a convenience sample of managers who made TM decisions (Glaser and Strauss, 1999). Given our research objective, we limited our interviews to those who were actively working for a Canadian organization and responsible for TM. We focused on HR managers and executives accountable for TM, including IT directors and CEOs of smaller companies. We therefore selected two case groups: 1) non-profit organizations (NPOs); and 2) for-profit organizations (FPOs). By including both types of organizations, we wished to replicate studies from outside Canada and compare the two groups in a Canadian context.

All interviewees were responsible for hiring and managing staff. Appendix 1 describes the interviewees, including organization classification, title, industry and organization size.

Each interview lasted about an hour. Interview responses were recorded via audio recordings and saved to a computer hard drive. The audio recordings were then transcribed using software that produced a draft transcript. Finally, the researchers revised and verified all the machine-generated transcripts.

Following the theory-driven (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) design of our study, we used a template analysis style of thematic analysis (King and Brooks, 2016) to analyze the interviews. Template analysis was useful, as our focus was across cases rather than within cases (King and Brooks, 2016). It also enabled us to define *a priori* tentative themes based on the conceptual model (Figure 1) in advance of the analysis. The *a priori* themes were redefined during data analysis. New themes, emerging through analytical engagement with

the data, could be defined and added to the template. After the analysis, the resulting template was compared with the conceptual model.

As is often the case with template analysis, we used a combined top-down and bottom-up coding approach (King and Brooks, 2016). The first stage was theory-driven. The transcripts were analyzed to identify themes and categories. General categories were informed by the existing TM literature, specifically the TM framework in Figure 1 (Bolander et al., 2017). The bottom-row boxes of the conceptual framework (Figure 1) with their definitions provided the coding system. We used these codes to decipher the interview data and thus identify instances of TM views and practices.

The second stage was data-driven. We were searching for themes that would describe TM practices that had not been identified during the first stage. This stage consisted of reading the interviews, assessing the ideas or concepts and tagging them with codes. We read the data to identify items that were not present in the theory-driven data. This approach allowed research findings to emerge from the interview transcripts without the limitations imposed by our framework (Thomas, 2006). We thus probed the data to refine or contradict our conceptual model and used conceptual memos to record the results. The codes and their level of agreement were included in the results.

2. Results

We will first report the results of the top-down analysis:

2.1 TM is Inclusive and Objective

We began by asking the managers how they defined TM. This question was derived from our conceptual framework to determine how the decision-makers viewed talent. When we spoke to the managers about their definition of TM, they stated the need to use TM to optimize each employee's contribution and bring it into line with the employers' objectives. The first theme then is the alignment of talent with the organizational objectives. The managers viewed TM as an objective assessment based on the organization's needs.

"So how well are they within their little team? How well do they produce? How is the team working with others? Do they meet their objectives? And we do yearly objectives for everyone and usually our objectives include a couple of real projects where they're trying to advance their services."

These managers defined talent in terms of specific characteristics of individuals, rather than as a group of individuals.

Both inclusive and exclusive views of TM were expressed. NPO and SME managers took an inclusive view.

"All employees [should be included in TM]. Every single one. It's to me indicative of the culture of the organization and of teams. When you talk about entry type positions within an organization—which are often the traditional reception and mailroom, I can't tell you how many times I have seen those positions—if you track that employee within the organization or onto the other organizations, they've moved on. I can't tell you how many times I have seen those people turn into very strong managers beyond into what I consider a more senior leader."

This is the second theme of inclusivity in organizational TM: all employees require some type of talent identification and development (Bolander et al., 2017; Swailes, Downs, and Orr, 2014). The managers recognized that different employees contribute differently to the organizational objectives but expected all employees to be included in TM practices. For them, TM focuses on employees, their well-being, their performance and their commitment to the employer. The interviewees believed that all roles require talented people. They also often said that TM should apply to all employees and not only to a specific subset of critical people.

Managers of smaller organizations talked about the need for inclusivity in TM practices. For example, managers in small organizations stated:

*"No, I think [TM] should include everybody, especially in a small organization. Basically, we can't afford to have people that aren't performing at their highest level of ability."
"If there's someone in your organization that you are not willing to invest in, they shouldn't be there"*

In larger FPOs, there were exceptions to the inclusive view of talent:

"... there are some functions that realistically anyone could do." "But [TM] shouldn't include all people because not all people can carry out the job that needs to be done for the organization to reach its objectives."

Managers in larger FPOs emphasized the impact of different roles on the value created by the organization.

"It is on a case-by-case basis, and that is the reason why. It's better analysis, so 20% of the people impact the results of the majority of the regions of the business. And we want to—rather than focusing more on the 80% which is bringing 20% of the results—we want to focus on [the] 20% of the people who bring 80% of the results in the business."

Again, the interviewees felt that people in different roles make different contributions. However, they also recognized that implementing an exclusive view of talent is not straightforward. They emphasized the need for systems to support a differentiated view of TM. For example, one manager said:

"You have to create an individual environment for each [of these] employees that allows them to maximize their interests, and their efficiency, and their productivity, and growth and all the dynamics that are important This needs the support of the whole organization."

When some employees are considered to create more value than others and thus receive more attention and compensation, the whole organization should share in this inclusive understanding.

2.2 Talent is Acquired, Input- and Output-Based

Managers were also consistent in viewing TM as a means to help employees realize their potential, emphasizing that talent, defined as specific to individuals, is acquired through development. Employees were expected to take the initiative in acquiring their skills. This

theme appeared when we asked managers to define TM, and whether they felt talent is innate or acquired. For them, talent is acquired: moreover, it is not just limited to technical skills required by job demands but also extends to employees' personal developmental needs.

"I think it can absolutely be acquired. I think that... again it ties back to engagement. If people have sort of the "what's in it for me" they are willing to learn anything. Initiative is something that is more innate to me. People seem to either have it, or they don't. Some people just wait for everything to be given to them; some people just naturally go out and want to learn and do and create."

The views on TM also extended to concern about long-term employee fit with the organization. Talent development is a pillar of the humanistic view, which states that every employee is valuable if properly developed (Bolander et al., 2017). Such an understanding is also consistent with the humanistic input/output combination. Talent is thus defined as a set of employee interests, ambitions, values, motivations and career orientations; its achievements are measured by performance (Bolander et al., 2017).

Next, we will report the results of the bottom-up analysis.

2.3 Autonomy and Communication

The interviewees typically viewed autonomy, connections with the mission and communication skills as indicators of talent.

"I like offering people a lot of responsibilities, a lot of different types [of] abilities, and letting them figure out where they want to end up."

NPO managers believed that people are attracted to their business through their perceived intrinsic ability to learn and make a difference. According to the employers, most NPO workers are drawn to their positions because they feel personally connected to the organization's mission. For example, at a non-profit that aims to fight a specific disease, they may feel a connection to that illness. An NPO's mission seems to establish a mutual relationship between the organization and the employees:

"But really I think we do attract people that have that intrinsic focus. So, I've always tried to make sure that people have some say in what they want to explore."

The interviewees stressed the importance of communication. They saw it as a means to agree on a mutual direction and enhance team bonding. For example, when asked whether every position requires a talented person, an interviewee replied:

"I think that you have to have communication skills. You don't have to be an expert to do any specific role."

For the interviewees, communication is a "natural talent" that can be developed. It *"actually helps build the interconnections inside and outside of the team."*

2.4 Implementation of TM

The interviewees reported that TM is practised in some capacity in their organization and that the responsibility is shared between an HR unit or function and the unit managers. TM practices are consistent with the contextual framework in the areas of recruitment, talent identification, development, retention management, career management and succession planning.

2.5 Recruitment

When asked about the talent available in the labour market, many managers stressed the importance of recruiting talent. TM begins with recruitment, and NPO managers stressed the challenge of competing for talented people in the job market on compensation alone. It can also be a challenge to access talent pools quickly.

When discussing recruitment, NPOs and SMEs stressed the importance of finding a fit with the organization, while large FPOs were more concerned about high performance. As one NPO manager stated:

"I think the one thing that we have to keep in mind is not to settle. Maybe we keep the job posting open an extra month and get more résumés to find the person. That's always a challenge. If you need someone right away, you do settle right? You go through the interview and then you realize, yeah, they could probably work. But you know it's probably best at that time if you're questioning it then."

2.6 Talent Identification and Development

When discussing how TM is practised in their organizations, NPO decision-makers cited the need to practise talent identification and believed it should be inclusive.

"Identified year over year in terms of through our performance management system or otherwise, and they would be the top performers nationwide in the organization who, you know, were very invested in their potential and their ability to make huge contributions. But talent management must include everyone, or you're going to run the risk of alienating a large mass of solid workers. You're going to demotivate them, and it could cause resentment against the key talent, and people could feel that there is no hope for them because they think they haven't been identified as key talent, so I think it has to include everybody, yes. But as a non-profit which is, you know, fiscally responsible and accountable, we can really only invest our highest resources in our identified key talent."

NPO decision-makers frequently emphasized talent development as their priority. Specifically, for NPOs, learning and development are tools for retention of employees. For them, the objective of talent development is to train employees, socialize them, gain their commitment and improve their competencies and performance. This view is described by Bolander et al. (2017), who noted that an organization identifies its employees' strengths and then supports them with training and encouragement to improve their performance. In our study, however, NPO interviewees believed in inclusion of all employees in talent development.

2.7 Retention Management

The managers saw TM as an HR policy that helps the employee influence the employer's objectives and become engaged with them. Keeping competent employees is a prerequisite for day-to-day business functioning. For NPOs, talent development and retention are inclusive and interconnected:

"Retention, we have to work on that piece particularly and development also at the same time. ... Development plays a good part in retention of the talent, so it ties together."

When asked about TM practices, managers indicated retention as a significant facet of organizational and employee growth. Indeed, there was broad consensus that human capital is a key source of organizational performance, and that talented employees are generally necessary for high organizational success. This relationship between employees and the organization should be stable for mutual growth. Larger FPOs, however, had a narrower view:

"We will listen to what each person's circumstances are, and then we will try to do the things that will retain them."

2.8 Career Management and Succession Planning

For our NPO interviewees, TM includes career management and succession planning to fill organizational gaps. They mentioned that their organizations use career management and succession planning as means to retain talent. FPOs put relatively more emphasis on career management:

"It really is more about an individual. Do you feel like you have the opportunities that you want? And if not, how do we personally help you get there?"

2.8.1 Reward Systems

In both NPOs and FPOs, employers said their talented employees require non-monetary rewards, such as opportunities and training. There was agreement that money is not enough to keep talented employees:

"I don't know if money is the motivator... money gets old very quickly."

FPO managers recognized the importance of such factors in providing opportunities for growth:

"(The employee) is super passionate about the industry and has been offered other jobs, and he hasn't taken them. They all have offered more money. I mean, he's decided to stay with us. Just because I think a lot of it; well, in my opinion, like you want to keep people learning new things, right? I think he didn't see himself continuing to learn in those other roles. Even though they initially paid more."

For NPO managers, monetary rewards are often viewed as restrictive and as an impediment to retaining talented employees:

"Recognition always is great to see; it is a little bit different being in the non-profit side, where in the private sector side I had more options in terms of reward [than] in the private sector. I was able to give larger raises, larger bonuses, things like "Thank you so much for going above and beyond. Here's a 100-dollar gift certificates for this." So, I had that freedom to do that in the private sector. In the non-profit there was none of that; rather the salaries are all managed by the steps and the grids and the staff association. There are no bonuses, and I can't go in and do any type of team-building activities that really cost anything. So that is a little bit of a challenge in the non-profit."

Instead of monetary rewards, other options are considered:

"We don't focus on the monetary value of the job. There are cultural and gratifying benefits that come with this type of work that we tend to focus on."

In the case of NPOs, training was cited as a means to reward and develop talent. But it was also seen as one of the first parts of the budget to be cut:

"One of the things you can do that is by offering ongoing training and opportunities. And that's something I think that we practise very often. But training is always the first piece of the budget to go. It's like everyone agrees that talent is important, but when it comes to budget time often talent is the one item that's always precarious and could be cut at any point."

Cutting the training and development budget reduces the manager's ability to retain staff:

"As soon as a training budget is even considered to be on the table, you are not practising talent management, and it is going to take you a tremendous amount of time to even regain trust with that staff who were engaged. That to me is a huge Achilles' heel for not-for-profits, a huge challenge."

2.8.2 Work Security (Retention Management/Succession Planning)

In contrast to FPOs, NPO managers stated that they felt they were losing talented employees due to the lack of career paths and promotion opportunities. For example, one manager talked about losing a talented employee:

"I would love to keep him. It's also sometimes I feel that we may not have all the career paths for everyone"

In addition, NPO managers face rigid HR systems:

"I think in fact there's probably some frustrations. One of the frustrations our staff do have is [that] promotable opportunities don't happen as quickly and maybe as on-demand as we would like. In the private sector, for example, I had a strong employee who was running as a junior [and] they could stay in the same role and I [would] make them a senior. Within our environment, you really can't do that. So, they stay a junior until you can convince HR that this role now has changed and [for] the needs of this role [it] has to have a senior."

A related challenge is the ability of NPOs to respond quickly to TM needs:

"The pace at which the organization does or doesn't move can be a challenge. So, you can put somebody in a program [and] you can say, you know, we certainly hope that one day you'll be one of our leaders. But if that doesn't come at a pace that is suitable for the individual and the benefit, we may lose them anyway. So that's another thing, you know, whether or not we used to be a very slow-moving organization, we're trying to be [a] much more rapid, agile organization."

The availability of career paths and opportunities in NPOs is limited, in part, by loyal employees being disinclined to leave:

"And nobody leaves. As I stated you get 30-year employees. So that also limits the amount of the hiring and the opportunities. So, you could have some very loyal employees, but they might also be a little bit frustrated. Yeah, some tension there because they like their culture. I can certainly tell you in some conversations with very high performing staff who by all rights should find promotable opportunities, but they haven't come to them for one reason or another; as frustrated as they are and as vocal as they may be, they still stay because they realize it's still a better environment than what they may have elsewhere."

2.9 Working Conditions

2.9.1 Organization of Work

Because fewer resources are available to an NPO than to an FPO, NPO managers felt that their employees would make decisions that were "more short-sighted in nature" and, as such, less strategic. For example, an NPO manager stated:

"We're driven in [a] non-profit to do as much as you can with as little as you can. And the other factor too is I think non-profits are more short-sighted in nature. So, you know we're just trying to make budget and get through the year. We tend to deal with here, anyway, one year at a time, and talent management is something where what you invest [in] now is probably going to pay off in 5 years. I don't think we look at it as a strategic investment, a long-term investment, and I don't know if that's because we're so focused on just getting through the year."

For these NPOs, TM is not based on an institutionalized framework:

"So, I think that the lack of a framework and the lack of funding in order to implement that framework, which includes training, is a challenge within our sector. And then it's just a lack of overall framework. Managers just don't know how to do it. They have to be taught how to properly deal with staff and how to do talent management. And you know many managers just go through the ranks without their formal training."

In contrast to NPOs, FPOs have barriers to TM that include time constraints and poor communication protocols and practices. FPO managers indicated that in their busy organizations there is not enough time for community and training:

"Yeah, obstacle [number] one is understanding where the organization has to be five years from now and putting in the change management to make sure that everyone understands we are looking for a different set of skills. And we're looking to train people on a new set of knowledge. ... the constraint for us has just been fitting it into the schedule [and] making sure that people actually have time to go and take those extra courses or take on Special Projects or whatever, on top of their regular workload."

2.10 Engagement

In both FPOs and NPOs, a critical indicator of TM is "engagement" as a measure of participation in decision-making and exerting effort toward organizational goals. Managers stressed the importance of employees feeling they are adding value to the team, learning new skills and enjoying their work:

"You want to feel like you're adding value. And again, feeling like you add value is tied so greatly to engagement. If you don't feel you matter, then you're not going to want to do a great job."

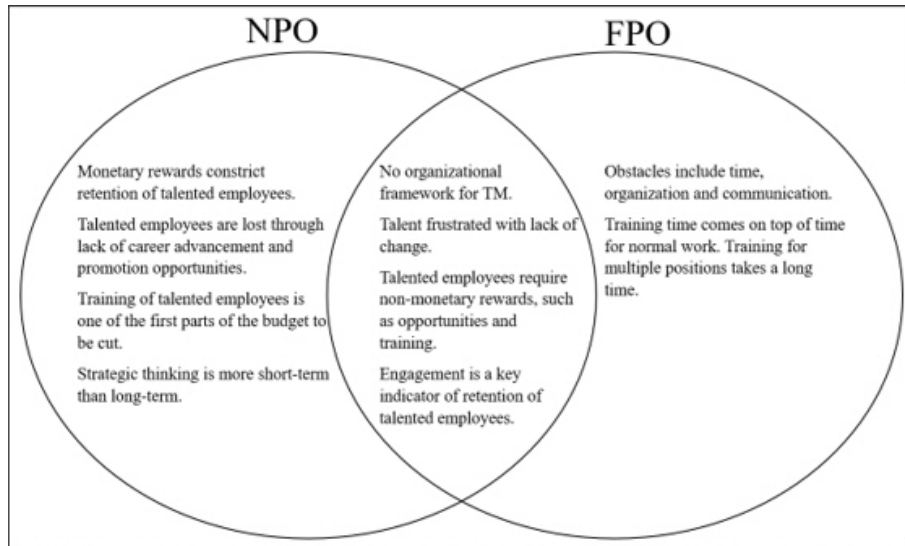
Additionally, managers thought that talented employees feel demotivated if they believe that their input has little impact on changing their organization's practices:

"... past practice at an organization shows individuals that nothing significant comes from employee engagement surveys ... [It] can have a huge detrimental effect on talent management. You'll often find individuals voicing things like 'why would we even waste this money and waste our time when the organization is clearly not in a position to react to it?' And that can be a huge de-motivator to the talent that you have."

Figure 3 summarizes the TM practices of NPOs and FPOs.

Figure 3

NPO and FPO TM practices



3. Discussion

In this study, we aimed to examine how TM is viewed and practised in a Canadian context, with a focus on SMEs and NPOs. Although TM practices have been deemed a priority and a significant concern by members of the public sector in Canada (Glenn, 2012), there has been little research on how managers view TM in Canada. Canadian studies have covered several TM practices: talent identification (Wiblen, 2016); TM in Canada's public sector (Glenn, 2012); TM in improving employee recruitment, retention and engagement within hospitality organizations (Hughes and Rog, 2008); and acquiring talent and person-organization fit through diversity management (Ng and Burke, 2005). Even within these limited studies of specific TM practices, the samples have not included the Canadian perspective. Our study expands upon previous research and specifically addresses the Canadian context.

Both inclusive and exclusive views of TM were expressed. NPO managers applied TM to every employee, thus indicating an inclusive view with an emphasis on development, retention and alignment with the employer's mission. This view is consistent with that of Nijs, Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries and Sels (2014). Such an inclusive view stands in contrast to the exclusive view of focusing TM programs on a select group of employees, which scholars such as Boudreau and Ramstad (2005) and Collings and Mellahi (2009) see as differentiating TM from conventional HRM. Proponents of the exclusive approach argue that decision-makers have an indistinct conceptualization of TM and its practices. Indeed, the results indicate that these managers practise TM as they would HRM. They do not differentiate the various functions within their organization and how these functions contribute differently to the value created. Although most of them see themselves as being responsible for TM, they view it as essentially a way of meeting demands for personnel through recruitment, selection, development, retention and sufficient compensation. This

observation is in line with other studies in which TM is described as being mere rhetoric (Cappelli, 2008).

Whenever the interviewees endorsed an exclusive view of talent, in line with McDonnell et al. (2017), they were often concerned about how organizational systems should support such practices. In this view TM is not something to be practised by management alone; it needs to be understood and supported by the whole organization. Specifically, it requires adaptability in organizational systems, such as collective agreements and accounting systems, which record how value is created in the organization. For example, if managers of accounting systems view people as a cost, how can an exclusive view of talent be implemented?

Most interviewees saw development as beneficial for both the employee and the employer (Fajčíková, Urbancová, and Kucírková, 2018). Because individuals are unlikely to develop without support (Beusaert, Segers, and Gijssels, 2011), development is key to organizational competitiveness. It is also a tool for retention (Joo, Hahn, and Peterson, 2015). "If you focus on development and motivation, you will get retention." This argument, made by the interviewees, is in line with the view in the TM literature that the development of talent is one of the biggest challenges of private and public organizations in maintaining sufficient talent.

As organizational performance is achieved through use of human capital, employee recruitment is often key to organizational success (Phillips and Gully, 2015). As the main obstacle for NPOs is compensation, it seems that these employers must find other means to attract, engage and retain their employees. The interviewees felt that talent should be inclusive and acquired, and many disclosed that they were searching for people who could be trained: "If you get at least a 50% fit to your job, hire them and then develop them more for your requirements."

Our findings are consistent with the existing literature: due to limited resources, employers often find it difficult to establish TM processes (Zhao and Thompson, 2019). NPOs have trouble attracting, motivating and retaining their employees, all of which often reduces the overall success of their business (Krishnan and Scullion, 2017). Lack of strategic TM lead to low levels of commitment and discipline among employees (Chung and D'Annunzio-Green, 2018).

Bolander et al. (2017) divide talent-related views and practices into four TM types: humanistic, competitive, elitist and entrepreneurial. The decision-makers in our sample were mostly of the humanistic type. The humanistic view of talent is subject- focused, acquired through development and equally inclusive and exclusive. Humanistic decision-makers are inclusive in their development activities; they embrace loosely defined career paths and show low reliance on recruitment. For all four TM types, Bolander et al. (2017) believe TM practices should be focused on talented people (subject) instead of on skills and knowledge (object). In contrast, our interviewees believed the focus should be mainly on developing the skills and knowledge (object) of all employees.

3.1 Canadian Context

Canada has a multicultural approach that promotes the integration of immigrants while helping minority groups sustain their cultural practices (Hiebert, 2016). As such, Canada's orientation toward immigration and diversity is unambiguously one of inclusivity. Former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in 1971 initiated this emphasis, stating that Canada had no official culture (Gagnon and Iacovino, 2016). Perhaps, this national culture of inclusivity is reflected in the TM practices of the managers in our sample.

The interviewees said they implemented specific policies to promote talent development for a diverse range of employees in a way that emulates the Canadian culture of inclusivity and which reflects largely positive attitudes toward immigration and diversity. Their approach is backed by such legislation as the Employment Equity Act, which supports equity in the workplace for women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and members of visible minorities (Jain and Lawler, 2004). This legislation applies to public sector employees, to portions of the federal public administration and to public sector agencies that employ one hundred or more employees. It requires special measures that include identifying and eliminating employment barriers (through policies, employment systems and practices), instituting favourable policies and practices and making reasonable accommodations for differences. These contextual factors have impacted the way talent is viewed.

Conclusions, Limitations and Areas for Future Research

Our findings indicate that both NPO and FPO managers generally feel they often have inadequate organizational frameworks for TM. Specifically, it is difficult to identify critical staff positions that differentially contribute to the employer's success, unless one has the support of a broad base of employees and can adjust how value is defined and recorded in organizational systems. More research is needed to learn how TM can be operationalized in an organization.

Our study is exploratory and descriptive. Future researchers should consider doing in-depth case studies of organizations that operate across Canada, with a view to exploring antecedents and outcomes of TM practices. One could also compare and contrast the views of those undertaking other functions in the organization, such as accounting, with the views of HR managers. If TM is an organizational activity, those who undertake accounting functions should share the TM perception of their colleagues elsewhere within an organization. Finally, one could investigate how accounting systems need to be adjusted to accommodate the recording and reporting of talent and how value is created.

Globalization has created a business context where markets and supply chains extend beyond the boundaries of any one jurisdiction. More work is needed to understand how TM is interpreted and practised within supply chains that are crossed by national and cultural differences.

Our study has several limitations. First, its narrow scope and its small sample size limit generalizability to other Canadian organizations. Because our interviewees were based in the province of Ontario, and because of the collaborative nature of business in Ontario, many of them likely knew one another through networking. Their TM views and practices had thus been influenced by those exchanges. Future researchers could also explore the organizational aspect of TM in different contexts. As language, legislature and culture produce novel TM understandings, there will be a need to study TM in Canadian provinces and territories other than Ontario.

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Appendix 1: Type of Organization, Interviewee's Title, Industry and Organization

Size				
ID	For-Profit or Non-Profit Organization	Interviewee's Title	Industry	Organization Size (based on employee count)
1	NPO	Manager/Information Technology	Arts	Medium (100 – 499 employees)
2	NPO	Director/Human Resources	Health Services	Medium (100 – 499 employees)
3	NPO	Senior Manager/Information Technology	Health Services	Medium (100 – 499 employees)
4	NPO	Senior Manager/Information Technology	Health Services	Medium (100 – 499 employees)
5	NPO	National VP/Information Technology	Health Services	Medium (100 – 499 employees)
6	NPO	CTO/Information Technology	Professional Services	Medium (100 – 499 employees)
7	NPO	Manager/Information Technology	Higher Education	Large (>500 employees)
8	NPO	Director/Information Technology	Health Services	Large (>500 employees)
9	NPO	CIO/Information Technology	Health Services	Large (>500 employees)
10	NPO	Director/Information Technology	Health Services Charity	Medium (100 – 499 employees)
11	NPO	Director/Information Technology	Health Services	Medium (100 – 499 employees)
12	NPO	Director/Information Technology	Higher Education	Large (>500 employees)
13	NPO	Manager/Information Technology	International Development	Medium (100 – 499 employees)
14	NPO	CEO	Civic, Social and Economic Development	Small (<100)
15	NPO	CEO	Engineering	Small (<100)
16	FPO	Manager/Human Resources	Consulting	Large (>500 employees)
17	FPO	CEO	Brewery	Small (<100)

18	FPO	Director/Human Resources	Manufacturing	Medium (100 – 499 employees)
19	NPO	CEO	Civic, Social and Economic Development	Small (<100)
20	FPO	Manager/Human Resources	Manufacturing	Medium (100 – 499 employees)
21	FPO	CEO	Retail Coffee	Small (<100)
22	FPO	CEO	Fitness	Small (<100)
23	FPO	COO	Training	Medium (100 – 499 employees)
24	FPO	CEO	Comedy	Small (<100)
25	FPO	CEO	Health Food	Small (<100)
26	NPO	Director/Human Resources	Community Services	Medium (100 – 499 employees)
27	FPO	CEO	Construction	Small (<100)
28	FPO	Director/Human Resources	Retail Food	Large (>500 employees)
29	FPO	Founder/President	Global Marketing and Finance	Small (<100)
30	NPO	COD (Chief of Organizational Development)	Community Services	Large (>500 employees)