### Competence Development of Temporary Agency Workers

Understanding the complexities of a triangular employment relationship

Nienke Woldman



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#### **Thesis**

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#### Wat niet kan is nog nooit gebeurd

(naar opa Norg; en ook naar Daniël Lohues die er een prachtig lied over schreef)

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Opportunities to learn and to develop competencies are key-aspects to improving people's overall quality of life, as they contribute to a person's independence, self-respect and well-being (cf. Kessels & Poell, 2004). Learning and development have been shown to be interdependent with economic growth, innovation and social cohesion (Kessels & Poell, 2004; Lisbon European Council, 2000). For this reason, the European Commission has made the facilitation of lifelong learning one of its focal points of the past two decennia (European Commission, 2010; Lisbon European Council, 2000). Its aim is to ensure access to learning opportunities for all citizens, regardless of age, throughout their lives. However, an examination of learning opportunities for adult citizens in their work context, shows that it is not self-evident that all employees have access to or are able to benefit from learning and development opportunities. Particularly, temporary workers find difficulties regarding their competence development, while it is the combination of their flexibility and competencies that is crucial to client organizations' continuity. In this dissertation, I focus specifically on this issue by investigating the competence development (CD) of temporary agency workers (TAWs) - referring to workers who are officially employed via an employment agency and who work for a client organization for a limited period of time (Liden, Wayne, Kraimer, & Sparrowe, 2003). Furthermore, I explore the complexities of this triangular employment relationship in relation to TAW's CD.

#### 1.1 Problem statement

Currently, temporary workers are increasingly being employed to compensate for fluctuations in an organization's personnel (e.g. de Cuyper, de Jong, de Witte, Isaksson, Rigotti, & Schalk, 2008; Borgogni, Consiglio, & Di Tecco, 2016). The deployment of these temporary workers – also known as non-standard, contingent, atypical, or flexible employees, see section 1.2.1 – creates both the numerical and financial flexibility required by organizations to maintain their competitive position or to guarantee their continued existence (e.g. Kornelakis, 2014). Simultaneously, hiring workers on a temporary basis creates the opportunity to make optimal use of employees' expertise (Chambel, Sobral, Espada, & Curral, 2015; Wilkens, Ruiner, & Küpper, 2013).

A major sub-group of these temporary workers (i.e. ±13% of the temporary workers in the European Union, and ±18% of the temporary workers in the Netherlands in 2017, Eurostsat, 2018¹) are TAWs. TAWs are employed via a unique triangular employment construction, characterised by an *employment relationship* between the TAW and the employment agency, a *management relationship* between the TAW and the client organization, and a *business relationship* between the client organization and the employment agency (Hakansson & Isidorsson, 2015), as illustrated in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The percentages present a rough indication as calculations are based on different Eurostat data, i.e. the amount of employees in the EU (in numbers), the percentage of TAWs of all employees in Europe, and the amount of temporary workers in Europe (in numbers).

Figure 1.1. See text box 1.1 for more information about TAWs in Europe and text box 1.2 about TAWs in the Netherlands.

In recent years, TAWs have been the fastest growing group of temporary workers (Chambel et al., 2015; Giunchi, Chambel, & Ghislieri, 2015; Lapalme, Simard, & Tremblay, 2011). Due to the triangular character of the employment relationship, TAW constructions have their own dynamics (Kalleberg, Nesheim, & Olsen, 2015), making them a special group for academic study (see section 1.2). TAWs once had the image that they participated in employment with low-education requirements for very limited periods of time (e.g. four to six weeks), for example seasonal work. However, increasingly, TAWs are employed as higher-educated employees and/or cover jobs for a relatively long period (e.g. for one year or longer, cf. Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015; Wilkens et al., 2013). This trend illustrates that the deployment of TAWs is now seen as a long-term structural solution for the continuity of organizations, rather than the short-term incidental solution for temporary vacancies it was in the past (e.g. Von Hippel, Mangum, Greemberger, Heneman, & Skoglind, 1997). The fact that organizations increasingly hire TAWs for a longer period of time confirms that organizations attract TAWs as a strategic step to strengthen their competitive position.

#### Text box 1.1 - Context description: TAWs in Europe

Data from the main European Union database (Eurostat) showed that in 2017, around 3.6 million people were employed as a TAW in the European Union. This equals 1.9 % of all employees and 1.6 % of the total EU working population (Eurostat, 2018). In terms of percentages, the Netherlands is in the top three countries when it comes to TAW employment relative to the total number of employees (Eurostat, 2018). Therefore, with regard to the way that TAWs are treated (e.g. with regard to their legal rights) the Dutch labour market is an example for many other European countries. However, it has worth noting that the numbers presented about the European situation need to be approached with care. As there are challenges regarding gathering data about temporary agency work in different countries, the data presented in different studies and documents does not necessarily accurately reflect the actual number of TAWs in the European Union (Countouris, Deakin, Freedland, Koukiadaki, & Prassl, 2016).

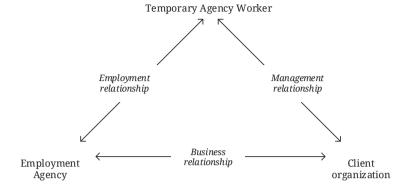
In 2013, the Netherlands was one of seven European countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Spain) to establish so-called "bipartite funds" to stimulate TAW training (Joint Eurociett/UNI Europa Project, 2013). Thus, this investment at a European level recognizes the importance of TAWs' CD, of offering enough CD development opportunities.

#### Text box 1.2 - Context description: TAWs in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands in particular, the number of TAWs has grown rapidly since 2013. In 2013, 205,000 employees in our country were employed via a TAW construction, in 2017 this number had risen to 282,000. In the second quarter of 2018, this number grew even further to 291,000 TAWs, equalling 3.3 per cent of the total working population (CBS Statline, 2018b). The relatively longer TAW-contracts (e.g. for one year instead of 6-8 weeks) have become increasingly popular; this is exactly the group of TAW-contracts that we focus on in this dissertation. Interestingly, from 2014 onwards, the growth of TAWs has not completely matched the increase in jobs following the economic crisis. These figures endorse the flexibilization of the Dutch labour market (Webbink, 2017).

In 2018, TAWs were employed via 3950 employment agencies providing TAW and/or payrolling services (CBS Statline, 2018a). In 2017, compared to other firms in the Netherlands, the TAW-branch included the fastest-growing firms, accounting for 35 per cent of the total number of fast-growing firms (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [CBS], 2018). Still, this growth of employment agencies leads us to consider the risks of TAW-employment. Unlike many other European countries (cf. Underhill & Quinlan, 2011) TAWs are formally protected by the Dutch labour law. In 1971, the first collective labour agreement was signed for TAWs (Webbink, 2017) indicating that from that date, TAWs were recognized as a specific group of temporary employees deserving particular protection. In 2015, some significant changes were made to the labour law for flexible workers: a clause specifically addressed to TAWs was included stating that the period to end a TAW-contract (by the employment agency, the client organization) is restricted to a maximum of 78 weeks; this used to be unlimited (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2017). This change illustrates the increased formal protection of TAWs in the Netherlands. However, to date, opportunities for competence development have not become part of the legislation.

In this dissertation, I focus on TAWs working in the non-profit sector, including (local, regional and national) governmental institutions, educational institutions, health care, and cultural institutions. An analysis of the numbers of TAWs in each of these sectors shows that, especially in the Dutch government, this number is high: in total, 37 per cent of all employees in the Dutch government were employed via a TAW-contract in 2017 (Flexbarometer, 2018).



*Figure 1.1.* Representation of the triangular relationship of a TAW construction (cf. Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015).

The idea of hiring TAWs as a structural solution is based on the rationale that involving an extra employment organization creates a balance between flexibility and security. This is also known as the 'flexicurity paradigm', (cf. Wilthagen & Tros, 2004) and, as such, creates opportunities for all parties involved: A client organization is then able to hire employees at reduced costs as the administration is outsourced to an employment agency (Hall, 2006). Moreover, client organizations have the flexibility to end the work relationship with these employees when their expertise is no longer relevant or necessary (cf. van Breugel, van Olffen, & Olie, 2005). An employment agency's core business is creating a good match between a client organization and those professionals with expertise who add value to this client organization (cf. Kroon & Freese, 2013). Last but not least, TAWs themselves gain the opportunity to develop their employability as they can perform different jobs/roles within different organizational settings (van Breugel et al., 2005; Felfe, Schmook, Schyns, & Six, 2008), knowing that the employment agency will help them find a new assignment when the previous one has ended. In this way, the TAW construction contributes to their boundaryless careers (e.g. Bravo, Seibert, Kraimer, Wayne, & Liden, 2015); these employees prefer careers in which they are flexible and free to switch between jobs and roles when desired. In other words, the TAW construction has the potential to become an ideal employment construction for present-day Western economies, as it provides opportunities for all parties involved.

However, scientific publications increasingly show that TAWs' experiences do not reflect this ideal image (e.g. Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015; Mitlacher, 2008, see section 1.2). In the recent years, the media have supported this alternative view. For example, they report that TAWs (as part of the larger group of temporary workers) do not feel that they have any work security, and that this affects their personal lives, and that it even affects society. For example, buying a house is problematic if the potential buyer does not have a permanent contract, and those TAWs who *do* 

own a house, acknowledge that they also experience a great deal of stress about taking care of their families and finances because of the insecure character of their temporary job(s) (Roerdink & Bulgan, 2017). TAWs are represented as the category of temporary workers least satisfied with their job when compared to other temporary work arrangements, and they have the least perspectives for a future permanent job ("Meer banen in uitzendbranche dan ooit", 2017). Furthermore, TAWs feel excluded from 'the team' in their client organization (Roerdink & Bulgan, 2017), as, for example, they are not invited to team meetings. On top of that, newspapers showed that organizations do not treat permanent and temporary workers equally as it comes to learning and development. For example, organizations appear to be hesitant in investing in temporary workers' CD, forcing them to invest in CD from personal resources (de Vries, 2018). This supports the dominant societal view that working via a TAW construction is far from ideal: even worse than having a temporary contract at an organization without any 'interference' from an employment agency (i.e. a bilateral temporary employment contract, Kalleberg et al., 2015), and that a permanent contract is the royal route to a successful career and a successful future in general.

Taken together, there is a great gap between the ideal situation that forms the starting point for TAW constructions and the practice of these constructions; a far from ideal situation. There are strong indications that TAW constructions do not result in an ideal balance between flexibility and security and, as such, do not yet meet their potential. Research on TAW constructions is in its infancy, and as yet, it remains unknown what is needed to create a favourable situation for all parties involved. In order to add to our understanding of TAW constructions, in this dissertation, I have two main objectives: (1) to create a better *understanding* of how TAWs and their constructions currently function and (2), to explore how TAW constructions can be *optimized* to meet the needs of all parties involved. As mentioned, the group of TAWs in the Netherlands and many other western economies is growing rapidly, and therefore it has become urgent to explore the particular challenges TAWs and their two employer organizations are faced with.

In this dissertation, I especially focus on the triangular relationship via the theoretical lens of TAWs' *competence development* (CD), as CD is considered as being key to building a successful triangular employment relationship (see section 1.2.4; see text box 1.3 for a description of how TAWs' CD is organized in the Netherlands).

#### Text box 1.3 - context description:

#### TAWs' opportunities for education, as defined in the Dutch collective employment agreement

In the Netherlands, TAWs are protected by a collective employment agreement [Collectieve arbeidsovereenkomst voor uitzendkrachten, CAO, in Dutch]. In this agreement, one chapter is included (i.e. chapter 9) that describes TAWs' rights as it comes to opportunities for education. It describes that the aim of this education is to strengthen TAWs' position on the labour market, and refers to function-specific and/or general labour market-oriented education (CAO voor Uitzendkrachten 2017-2019, 2019).

Particularly, *employment agencies* are obliged to spend 1,02 per cent of the gross salary of a TAWs to his/her education without passing on these costs to the TAW him/herself (CAO voor Uitzendkrachten 2017-2019, 2019). As such, the employment agency is held responsible for TAWs competence development. As becomes clear from the collective employment agreement, the facilitation of competence development mainly includes (financial) support of *formal* education of at least 3 hours, with a *supervisor* physically present, and an *evaluation* of the educational programme afterwards. Besides, if a TAW or the employment agency prefers so, there is an opportunity to discuss a personal development plan with the employment agency, or to explore TAWs' competencies on a five-year basis.

If TAWs have the opportunity to develop their competencies while working at a client organization, in theory, all parties involved in the triangle will benefit. Moreover, as CD is generally known to be an important aspect of work performances (cf. Mulder, 2001; 2014), job satisfaction (cf. Hager, 1998) and employability of employees (van der Heijden, Boon, van der Klink, & Meijs, 2009; Thijssen, van der Heijden, & Rocco, 2008), it has the potential to go beyond obvious and frequently-mentioned drawbacks of TAW constructions, such as the lack of a permanent contract. Client organizations can make optimal use of TAWs' capacities, gaining maximum profit from employees that enter their organization with fresh blood, new knowledge and skills (cf. Gallagher & McLean Parks, 2001). Employment agencies can increase the chance that their TAWs will continue to work for them by offering opportunities for CD, as well as using CD to ensure that their TAW-workforce is up-to-date in their field and of maximum value for the client organizations they do business with (cf. Kroon & Freese, 2013). TAWs benefit from the fact that they are working on their employability (cf. Dekker & Wilthagen 2014; Mulder, 2001; Veld, Semeijn, & van Vuuren, 2015) and thereby contributing to their long-term career instead of to just their current assignment. Offering TAWs opportunities to develop their competencies may positively contribute to TAWs' experiences and work performances, and as such, it has the potential to counterbalance any negative influences of the triangular employment relationship. Altogether, the main research question of this dissertation reads:

What is the potential of competence development for improving temporary agency work constructions?

Further in this chapter, I present the theoretical foundation of this dissertation where I explore research in the field of temporary work in general and TAWs in particular, and on research in the field of CD, as these are the main concepts of this dissertation. I then discuss the scientific relevance in terms of conceptual and methodological merits. The Introduction concludes with an overview of the different chapters.

#### 1.2 Theoretical foundation

#### 1.2.1 The research domain of temporary work and TAWs in particular

In the literature, temporary workers are described as workers who are employed for limited duration, often with a fixed end date (de Cuyper et al., 2008). However, it refers to this group using different terms. Where US and Canadian literature predominantly refers to 'contingent workers', European literature mainly refers to 'temporary', 'fixed-term', 'non-permanent' or 'flexible workers', and applies these terms interchangeably (cf. de Cuyper et al., 2008; Connelly & Gallagher, 2004). Studies on temporary workers (usually abbreviated to 'temps') often focus on their different experiences compared to their colleagues with a more "standard" contract (i.e. a fulltime contract for an indefinite period of time, Connelly & Gallagher, 2004; e.g. de Cuyper & de Witte, 2007; Ferreira Sequeda, de Grip, & van der Velden, 2015; Forrier & Sels, 2003; Vaiman, Lemmengaard, & Azevedo, 2011). Furthermore, studies often focus on finding differences between experiences of various types of temporary contracts, for example differentiating between direct hired employees, contractors, seasonal workers, and TAWs (e.g. Felfe et al., 2008; Gallagher & McLean Parks, 2001; Gracia, Ramos, Peiró, Caballer, & Sora, 2011; Green, 2008; and also review studies by Boyce, Ryan, Imus, & Morgeson, 2007; Connelly & Gallagher, 2004; de Cuyper et al., 2008; Wilkin, 2013). Particularly this latter stream of research confirms that there is much differentiation among types of temps, both with regard to the (legal) conditions under which they work and with regard to their perceptions about their temporary position (e.g. Gracia et al., 2011). Due to this development in research on temps, and because the number of TAWs has grown globally in the last decade (Chambel et al., 2015), their situation is becoming increasingly highlighted and is developing into a distinct domain of research. TAW constructions differ from bilateral temporary employment constructions in that the addition of an extra employment party creates particular complexities in the work arrangement (Kalleberg et al., 2015), leading to significant different psychological dilemmas.

In the TAW-literature, two theoretical approaches dominate the scientific discussions. First of all, we find a stream of literature with a psychological approach to TAW constructions, *focusing on the effects of a TAW construction for TAWs themselves*. These studies explain the mental states of TAWs with regard to the TAW construction; what do they feel and what are their experiences? For instance, studies focus on the psychological constructs of job satisfaction (e.g. Aletraris, 2010; Kalleberg et al., 2015) organizational commitment (e.g. McKeown, 2003; Slattery, Selvarajan, Anderson, & Sardessai, 2010), and perceived organizational support (POS, e.g. Giunchi et al., 2015; Liden et al., 2003).

Second, we recognize the Human Resource Management (HRM)-approach to TAW constructions. This stream of literature *concentrates on the way organizations deal with TAWs and the risks of TAW constructions*. An example of topics that dominate discussions in this stream of literature are TAWs' job security and job/work satisfaction (e.g. Hall, 2006; Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015; Torka & Schyns, 2007; Underhill & Quinlan, 2011), TAW-work as a stepping-stone towards permanent work (e.g. Hopp, Minten, & Toporova, 2016), opportunities for training for TAWs (e.g. Bartlett, 2001; Chaudhuri & Bartlett, 2014; Forrier & Sels, 2003) and human resource practices in general (e.g. Soltani & Wilkinson, 2010; Stanworth & Druker, 2006). Without intending to be exhaustive and complete in presenting research conducted on TAWs to date, I elaborate on both approaches to TAW-research. Moreover, I explain how the present dissertation, which focuses on the competence development approach, builds on both the psychological and HRM approaches.

#### 1.2.2 Psychological approach to TAW-research

A number of studies have paid attention to the so-called positive outcomes of work for TAWs, such as job satisfaction, well-being, organizational commitment, and turnover intention. In this thesis, I have labelled these studies as the psychological approach to TAW-research.

Studies with a psychological approach share four characteristics that particularly appear in studies that focus on organizational commitment, a concept of high interest in TAW-research and that is one of the focal points of this dissertation (i.e. Chapter 2).

First of all, many studies base their work on Social Exchange Theory (SET, Blau, 1964) that theorizes, in the context of labour, that employees tend to reciprocate favours they receive from their employment organization. According to this theory, individual behaviour is based on the normative principle of reciprocity of favours (Slattery et al., 2010). It is exactly this reciprocity of favours that places TAWs in a complex position (e.g. Slattery et al., 2010; Liden et al., 2003). On the one hand, their temporary position may have consequences for the reciprocity principle: as organizations do not offer them a permanent position, they have to offer something else in return for a positive attitude from their TAWs (see also Chapter 2 for an explanation of the SET-theory with

regard to TAWs). On the other hand, as TAWs have to deal with *two* employment organizations, they may reciprocate toward the other organization than the one that offers the benefit.

For example, Slattery and colleagues (2010) studied the influence of job characteristics (i.e. skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback, cf. Hackman & Oldham, 1976 as cited by Slattery et al., 2010) on TAWs' organizational commitment towards both of their employment organizations, their job satisfaction, and turnover intention. They found that all of these job characteristics positively related to TAWs' organizational commitment and job satisfaction at both organizations. Moreover, they found that these effects were stronger for the client organization than for the employment agency; this is also confirmed in other studies (Giunchi et al., 2015; Liden et al., 2003, McKeown 2003). McKeown (2003) focused particularly on TAWs' organizational commitment towards both employment organizations and added to Liden et al. (2003) and Slattery et al. (2010) that TAWs' organizational commitment to the one organization may be at cost of their commitment to the other. In addition to these studies focusing on organizational commitment, Giunchi, Emanual, Chambel and Ghislieri (2016) studied TAWs' perceptions of job insecurity and its effects on perceived workload and job exhaustion. Their study showed that perceived job insecurity was associated with job exhaustion, and that this relationship was mediated by workload. These studies all have in common that they seem to start from the position that it is an investment for a TAW to be employed via a TAW construction as it has negative consequences for the characteristics of their job, their perceptions of work in general, and the support they feel from their employment organizations. Hence, a TAW construction negatively influences TAWs' mental states and that there has to be some form of return for this investment to become a healthy employment situation. It is exactly this 'healthy' character that is (implicitly or explicitly) questioned in these psychological studies.

Related to this issue, a *second* characteristic of studies with a psychological approach to TAW-research is that they explicitly take the *dual* character of the triangular relationship into account. Studies examined TAW's perceptions towards the employment agency *and* towards the client organization, as well as the extent to which these perceptions are interrelated, as is clear in studies by Liden et al. (2003), McKeown (2003) and Slattery et al. (2010), Giunchi et al (2015). Logically, this dual character is seen as being primarily relevant when studying concepts that relate to both organizations, such as organizational commitment and perceived organizational support (POS). These psychological-oriented studies thus aim to conceptually meet the triangular character of a TAW construction.

However, remarkably, a *third* – methodological – characteristic of these studies is that they often restrict their research to the perspective of the TAWs. In other words, they do not account for other perspectives of the triangle, such as the representatives of the two employment organizations. *Fourth*, studies with a psychological approach to TAW-research often apply similar methodologies.

They mainly apply large scale survey-research in which theories and constructs validated among permanent workers are applied to the situation of TAWs, and tested to determine the extent to which these validations hold true.

#### Lessons learnt from the psychological approach to TAW-research

Different lessons can be learnt from these psychological-oriented TAW-studies. First, the results of these studies subscribe the uniqueness of the triangular character of TAW constructions. They unanimously acknowledge that this triangular character results in unique psychological processes for TAWs. Although aspects of the TAW work show comparable results to studies of permanent workers (e.g. regarding the job characteristics studied by Slattery et al., 2010), different studies have shown that other factors are *of particular importance* for creating positive work outcomes *of TAWs*. Perceptions of job (in)security workload and perceived organizational support are major aspects in this respect. In addition, organizational commitment appears to be the most prominent concept of study within this stream of literature. As such, the second lesson that can be learnt is that organizational commitment is a crucial contributory factor to a fruitful triangular relationship in TAW constructions (cf. Dekker & Wilthagen, 2014). Building on this lesson, in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, TAWs' organizational commitment is a point of focus. This chapter specifically examines the manner and degree to which TAWs' organizational commitment can be explained by their perceptions of the offered opportunities for competence development (OfCD). Attention is also paid to the uniqueness of the triangular relationship by examining TAWs' organizational commitment towards both employment organizations.

It is remarkable that all these studies tend to end with the same message towards client organizations: if client organizations hire TAWs for strategic reasons, then they need to pay explicit attention to the TAWS' situation (e.g. Aletraris, 2010; Galais & Moser, 2009; Slattery et al., 2010). Client organizations should treat them equally as permanent employees when it comes to job characteristics such as task autonomy, while remaining aware of their unique triangular employment construction. If organizations ignore these aspects, the chance of negative effects is higher, including lower organizational commitment and lower job satisfaction that, in turn, results in lower performances. This can even increase the TAWs' intention to leave the client organization (cf. Giunchi et al, 2016; e.g. Slattery et al., 2010), thus all of these outcomes are strategically disastrous. As such, a *third* lesson that can be learnt is the necessity to explore and examine how these negative and even detrimental aspects can be turned into positive ones for the TAWs and for both organizations. In this dissertation I argue that a lens of CD has this potential (see section 1.2.4 for a description of the potential of CD and section 1.2.5 for an elaboration of CD in general).

#### 1.2.3 HRM approach to TAW research

Studies with an HRM-approach to TAW constructions have a common focus on HRM-oriented problems and challenges (i.e. organization-related antecedents) that influence TAW-work. Despite this common focus, there is greater variety among HRM-oriented studies than found in psychological-oriented studies regarding the concepts studied, the methodologies, and the results. I have selected a number of these studies to illustrate this diversity, and to simultaneously show their common focus on HRM-challenges of TAW constructions.

Hall (2006) identified HRM-related challenges regarding the management of TAWs and argued that the extent to which HRM is challenged depends on the extent to which organizations strive for high involvement and high-performance work practices (referring to Ramsey et al., 2000). For example, these high-performance work practices depend on development and deployment of complex skills, the design of enriched and challenging jobs, and perceptions of considerable autonomy by individuals as well as teams (Brown, Reich, & Stern, 1993; Pfeffer, 1995; Whitfield & Poole, 1997 as cited by Hall, 2006). Hall (2006) concluded that TAWs scored lower on all of these aspects than directly hired workers, and that TAW-work is associated with lower job satisfaction, autonomy, empowerment and skills utilization when compared to their permanent colleagues. Aspects highlighted by psychological-approach studies are recognizable in this, but Hall's work adds by focusing on the role of client organizations. His main conclusion is that client organizations' HRM-strategies defined for directly hired workers do not align with those of TAWs, placing the TAWs in a more difficult and vulnerable position as there are no specific HRM-policies and practices in place for them.

Likewise, Underhill and Quinlan (2011) pointed to the lack of specific HRM-policies for TAWs. They state that it is the task of *both* the employment agency *and* the client organization to match their policies in order to strengthen TAWs' position. If these organizations do not match TAWs' wishes and demands and do not align their policies, TAWs are in a vulnerable position at their client organizations and might be subject to (a) a lack of social support from colleagues at the client organization, (b) feel that they are 'between two stools' when it comes to organizational policies, and (c) lack the optimal possibility to cooperate with their colleagues due to a lack of information (Underhill & Quinlan, 2011).

Mitlacher (2008) presented other HRM-challenges by dividing these into three categories: (1) the nature of the work, (2) job prospects, and (3) TAWs' compensation and benefits. According to Mitlacher (2008), one of the main challenges to increasing TAWs' job prospects is to offer them specific training programmes as well as challenging assignments.

#### Lessons learnt from the HRM-approach to TAW-research

From these studies, different lessons can be learnt. *First*, we learn that the complexities of the triangular employment construction are *also* captured in HRM-oriented aspects, such as HRM-strategies and policies that either do/do not apply to TAWs, or do/do not align with TAWs' needs. In this way, this approach adds to the psychological studies on TAWs in which it became clear that this complexity is captured in TAWs' individual psychological challenges and dilemmas (i.e. dealing with the consequences of being temporarily employed and of dealing with two employment organizations rather than one). In particular, the HRM-oriented challenges result in urgent need for both client organizations and employment agencies to take actions with regard to the TAW management (e.g. Forrier & Sels, 2003; Hall, 2006; Torka & Schyns, 2007; Soltani & Wilkinson, 2010). This reflects a *second* lesson, being that it is still unclear what client organizations and employment agencies can do in order to improve their HRM-policies for TAWs: the studies that refer to this issue only do so in their discussions rather than that these issues were the focus of the study. In this dissertation, we react to these needs in Chapter 3 where we investigate the role of both employment organizations.

Another important lesson learnt from the literature is that HRM-oriented studies appear to take a managerial and strategic approach to HR, leaving the developmental side of HR (i.e. competence development of TAWs) underdeveloped. As CD is a major aspect of HRM (e.g. Gardiner, Leat, & Sadler-Smith, 2001; Watkins & Marsick, 1995), this subject could be expected to be widely discussed in the HRM-oriented literature. However, in the studies we reviewed, CD is either presented as a means to achieve the strategic goals of organizations in which it is narrowed down to training (e.g. Chaudhuri & Bartlett, 2014; Forrier & Sels, 2003) for which an economic perspective is taken, or to professional development measured in terms of one item (e.g. Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015). Both cases provided a limited perspective towards TAWs' CD. Although they provide relevant insights into strategic perspectives, research on TAWs' CD can be enriched by providing a more developmental perspective as stressed by the authors of the concerning studies themselves (e.g. Forrier & Sels, 2003). Therefore, I set out to study CD comprehensively in this dissertation, paying attention to its conceptual complexities and requirements. Special attention is paid to TAWs' expectations and fulfilled expectations of opportunities offered for CD (Chapter 2), to conditional and success factors of TAWs' CD related to the TAW construction (Chapter 3), and to TAWs' engagement in CD-activities with particular attention being paid to informal learning, as engaging in these forms of learning activities provide particular challenges for TAWs (Chapter 4).

#### 1.2.4 Moving beyond the two approaches to TAW research: taking a CD approach

TAW constructions were originally created on the premise that they offered potential benefits for all parties involved. Nevertheless, both the media and scientific literature describe and stress the vulnerable position of TAWs and the risks of working via a TAW construction. As a consequence, we have an increasingly clear picture of the risks of TAW constructions, particularly for TAWs themselves, as reflected in studies with a psychological approach. Moreover, studies with an HRMapproach to TAW-research paint a clear picture of the HR-challenges for organizations. However, almost no research has been conducted on how TAW constructions can work well and how they can exploit their potential better. To achieve this, the two approaches need to come together. Each approach represents a different stakeholder group – the psychological approach mainly views TAW constructions from the perspective of TAWs, whereas HRM-oriented studies mainly focus on the perspective of the organizations involved. Separately, this is not enough to provide information about employment relations (cf. Peel & Boxall, 2005). As it is the triangular relationship that makes a TAW construction unique and complex, both approaches need to be combined. In this dissertation, I do this, and I even move beyond the psychological and HRM approach by introducing a novel approach to TAW-research: I have taken a CD approach to this TAW study, as this has the potential to bring the wishes and needs of the three parties, TAWs, their client organization, and the employment agency, together. CD is generally known to be an important aspect of work performances (cf. Mulder, 2001; 2014), job satisfaction (cf. Hager, 1998) and employability of employees (van der Heijden et al., 2009; Thijssen, van der Heijden, & Rocco, 2008). Therefore, it has the potential to turn the abovementioned challenges and risks into a healthy and fruitful TAW construction, going beyond the obvious and regularly mentioned drawbacks of TAW constructions, such as not having a permanent contract.

#### 1.2.5 Competency, competence and competence development

The term "competency" refers to the integrated cluster of knowledge, skills and attitudes that employees need to successfully perform tasks (Mulder, 2014). A competency is part of a more generic competence (Mulder & Winterton, 2017). The term "competency" is gaining increased attention in the literature on Human Resource Development (HRD) in organisations as well as in the literature on employability. It is widely agreed that employees' successes do not depend on isolated pieces of knowledge, nor single skills or attitudes, but on the combination of these aspects and the way employees apply their integrated set of knowledge, skills and attitudes to specific job-related problems (Mulder, 2017; Stoof, Martens, van Merriënboer, & Bastiaens, 2002). Related to this, I approach CD in this dissertation from a socio-constructivist perspective, i.e. that learning is not restricted to the (observable) transmission of abstract knowledge from one individual to another; rather, it is viewed as a more (unobservable) social process which is situated in a specific context

and embedded within a social and physical environment (e.g. Bound & Lin, 2013). More specifically, the knowledge and insights that professionals need to continuously develop themselves are embedded in their daily practice and are co-constructed in interactions with colleagues (e.g. Bound & Lin, 2013; Tynjälä, 2008) and in interaction with the restrictions of the workplace (cf. Billett, 2009). These ideas are, for instance, reflected in literature on 'workplace learning' (Malloch, Cairns, Evans, & O'Connor, 2010) and 'communities of practice' (Tynjälä, 2013). As such, CD refers to the holistic process of acquiring new meaningful context-specific clusters of knowledge, skills and attitudes by means of formal and informal learning activities (cf. Tynjälä, 2008); this process is required for successful performance (Mulder, 2006).

Inherent to this socio-constructive perspective on CD which is focused on the process of learning (Bound & Lin, 2013), it is argued that CD can have many pathways, distinguishing between (more) formal and (more) informal ways of learning (cf. Tynjälä, 2008). Formal learning refers to certificated learning activities, such as training courses, workshops, and educational programs (Eraut, 2000). According to Eraut (2000), informal learning can be either deliberate (e.g. by meeting with a colleague to ask how a specific computer programme works), reactive (e.g. an understanding that, after that meeting, it has helped resolve an issue), or even implicit (e.g. where specific task capabilities improve over time, without the realization that improvement has occurred). Tynjälä (2008) also noted that at work, different learning processes and learning outcomes may occur, and summarized the ways people learn at work. She distinguished the following categories: Learning "(1) by doing the job itself, (2) through co-operating and interacting with colleagues, (3) through working with clients, (4) by tackling challenging and new tasks, (5) by reflecting on and evaluating experiences, (6) through formal education, and (7) through extra-work contexts" (Tynjälä, 2008, p.134). Tynjälä (2008) thus adds to the work done by Eraut (2000) by distinguishing activities of learning, in which the different manifestations of informal learning described by Eraut (2000) can take place.

Formal and informal learning can go hand in hand and together, they can encourage the development of a specific competency. Moreover, it is this combination of formal and informal learning activities that contributes to employees' employability (e.g. Froehlich, Beausaert, Segers, & Gerken, 2014). Therefore, in this dissertation, I define CD as a complex process of development, which is, by definition, not limited to formal training situations that are structured, planned and provided by a teacher or trainer. Rather, CD encompasses employees' engagement in training programs, education, and in development courses *as well as* any type of experiential learning activity for the purpose of acquiring the competencies necessary to meet current and future work requirements (cf. Jacobs & Park, 2009). This perspective adds to previous studies on TAWs' CD, as these mainly focused on *formal* CD-activities, such as their training efforts (Forrier & Sels, 2003), or their perceptions of training (Chambel et al., 2015), neglecting more informal CD-activities.

#### Opportunities for competence development

To answer the dissertation's main research question, we have focused not only on the kinds of activities TAWs actually undertake to develop their competencies, but also (and even mainly) on the organization of these CD-activities by employment organizations, and on the kinds of opportunities for CD (OfCD) that are offered by them. In this way, we aimed to meet the 'two sides of the coin' with regard to TAWs' participation in CD, referring to Billett's (2001) distinction between organization's affordances and employee's agency to engage in learning. Billett (2001) identified that, to participate in workplace learning, it is both crucial (1) that organizations are ready to afford activities and provide guidance for CD, and (2) that individual employees see and value these opportunities for their own work or for their future career and, in other words, take responsibility and show willingness for their own development. Likewise, Rau (2006) pointed out that offering learning opportunities to employees is not enough to let them actually learn. Rather, the kinds of opportunities offered will determine the quality of learning and, similarly, the level of employee's engagement in CD-activities, will determine what they learn (Billett, 2001). In other words, if one of these aspects is not optimally present, this will detract from an employee's CD.

#### 1.3 Scientific relevance of this dissertation

There are three main aspects with respect to scientific relevance in this dissertation. Two of these are based on the theories described in the previous sections and on the lack of studies on TAWs found in the literature: (A) the theoretical approach taken to explore the potential of TAW constructions, with respect to CD, and (B) our focus on all perspectives within the triangle. The third aspect of scientific relevance includes (C) the multimethod approach of the studies we conducted and that are described in this dissertation. Each of these aspects is detailed separately.

#### 1.3.1 A CD approach to TAW constructions

To bring the psychological and HRM approaches to TAW-research together and to go beyond these approaches, we have taken TAWs' CD as a starting point for understanding the complexities of a TAW construction. As said, I believe that this approach has *advantages* for all parties involved: the employee, the client organization, and the employment agency (see page 14 for an elaboration of this potential for all parties). Thus, the *first* aim is related to the lens of CD and has the objective of providing a *positive* perspective on TAW constructions i.e. shifting from finding problems towards finding solutions which contribute to the scientific knowledge of what works and what does not work in TAW constructions.

Second, studies have been conducted on CD in relation to TAWs, however, these have presented fragmented results. Previous work in the field of TAWs has mainly focused on formal CD-activities, such as their training. We aimed to add to these studies by focusing on both formal and

informal CD-activities, with particular attention paid to *informal* CD-activities. Engaging in informal learning activities gives learners *themselves* the control over their learning processes (Preenen, Verbiest, van Vianen, & van Wijk, 2015) which implies that these kinds of learning activities make TAWs less dependent on the appointments made between the two employment organizations.

Moreover, previous work has mainly focused on TAWs' participation in CD and their experiences with regard to these activities, leaving aside *the opportunities* TAWs had to participate in these activities (see section 1.2.5 for the explanation of affordances versus agency of CD-opportunities). In this dissertation, we conducted studies to be able to draw conclusions with regard to both the agency *and* to the affordances of CD as both are needed to make optimal use of CD (cf. Billett, 2001).

By paying attention to these aspects in the different studies, we present an up-to-date and more comprehensive view of TAWs' CD.

#### 1.3.2 Taking all perspectives of the triangle into account

This dissertation adds to previous work by focusing on the complete triangle and the TAWs' perspectives. Previous work on TAWs, and particularly on TAWs' CD, has focused on either one stakeholder perspective of the triangle (i.e. a focus on TAWs themselves, e.g. Chambel et al., 2015; Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015; Preenen et al., 2015; a focus on the perspective of the client organization, e.g. Stanworth & Druker, 2006; or on the perspective of the employment agency, e.g. Kroon & Freese, 2015), or two stakeholder perspectives particularly referring to the TAW and the client organization (e.g. Chaudhuri & Bartlett, 2014; Forrier & Sels, 2003). Until now, research has not 'covered' all three lines: the management relationship, the employment relationship, and the business relationship (see Figure 1.1). To the best of our knowledge, only a handful of studies have included the combined perspectives of the TAW, the client organization, and the employment agency (e.g. Soltani & Wilkinson, 2010). Social Dilemma theory tells us that the maximum result of a triangular employment relationship is reached when all parties collaborate (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.3 for an explanation of Social Dilemma theory). As such, in order to find out what contributes to a healthy and fruitful triangular relationship for all parties involved, all perspectives of the triangle need to be taken into account. The perspective of the whole triangle is captured in different aspects: (1) that opportunities for CD offered at both employment organizations are explored (seen from the TAWs' perspective), rather than focusing on the client organization alone, and (2) that all parties have a voice in the question of how the triangular relationship can be optimized in terms of CD.

#### 1.3.3 Multimethod approach

To date, especially in the psychological TAW-literature, "traditional" methodologies (cf. Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999) were primarily applied, i.e. large-scale survey data analysed by means of quantitative techniques. In this dissertation, I go beyond these commonly used methodological frameworks by taking a multimethod approach (cf. Brewer & Hunter, 2006). A rich palette of data and analysis techniques are used that *together* contribute to our understanding of the TAW construction. Specifically, it provides both a large-scale and an in-depth perspective of the TAW construction, using both quantitative and qualitative data, and both variable-centred and personcentred analyses.

#### 1.4 Chapters in this dissertation

The dissertation includes three main chapters exploring the different aspects of TAWs' CD, including TAWs' CD *expectations* and *fulfilled expectations* (chapter 2), conditions and success factors of organizing CD as perceived by TAWs, their direct managers at the client organization and HRM-advisors at the employment agency (chapter 3), and their actual learning activities as perceived by TAWs themselves (chapter 4). Together, these aspects provide a rich image of the complexities of the triangular employment relationship of a TAW construction. The main focus of each of these chapters is explained below. Figure 1.2 presents an overview of the chapters.

Chapter 2 presents the results of the study on TAW's *expectations* and *fulfilled expectations* of opportunities for competence development (OfCD) and its relationship with their affective commitment (AC) towards the client organization and the employment agency. Additionally, it explores to what extent TAWs believe that one or both of their employment organizations are responsible for offering them OfCD, as this increases our understanding of TAWs' expectations regarding OfCD. Based on survey data (n=449), we conducted multiple regression analyses to explore the relationships between OfCD and AC. Furthermore, we explored qualitative data bottom-up and by categorization to understand TAWs' perceptions of the responsibilities of both employment organizations (and their own) for offering OfCD.

In Chapter 3, we explore the *conditions and success factors* of organizing TAWs' CD, based on the expectation that this has the potential to let a TAW construction actually work as a *triangular* employment relationship. Through a CD lens, we explore why TAW constructions do not work as an actual triangle as hypothesized in the literature, and what is needed to improve the use of this triangular employment relationship. We conducted a multiple case study (n= 7 cases) and, in each case, three stakeholder groups were brought together in a group interview. Stakeholders included the TAW, the direct manager at the client organization, and an employment agency HRM-advisor.

In Chapter 4, we focus on TAWs' *engagement* in *informal* learning activities at the client organization. To date, little research has been conducted with respect to TAWs' informal learning

behaviour (e.g. Preenen et al., 2015). Other research shows that informal learning has the potential to (partly) compensate the lack of formal learning activities that TAWs have to deal with, as it gives them control over their own learning process. In particular, in this chapter, TAWs' perceptions of their *deliberate* informal learning activities are explored, as these kinds of informal learning activities can be controlled actively by the learner. Moreover, in this chapter we set out to create TAW *profiles* to meet the personal character of informal learning. We conducted a Latent Class Analysis (n=449) based on three *crucial* deliberate informal learning activities (i.e. reflection, asking for feedback, and knowledge sharing) and four personal factors known to relate to people's learning behaviour (i.e. self-efficacy, learning goal orientation, affective commitment and career perspective).

## Chapter 1

General introduction Main research question and theorizing research about TAWs and the potential of OfCD

# Chapter 2

Expectations and fulfilled expectations of OfCD

Analysis of the relations between TAWs' expectations and fulfilled expectations of CD of both organizations and their level of affective commitment towards both organizations (parallel and cross-effects), as well as exploration of the perceived responsibilities of initiating OfCD.

Multiple regression analyses & qualitative data analysis

# Chapter 3

Conditions of TAWs' CD

Impeding and fostering factors as recognized by *all* parties involved in the TAW construction.

Multiple case study

# Chapter 4

Engagement in informal learning activities

Profile analysis based on TAWs' selfreported deliberate informal learning activities (i.e. reflection, asking for feedback, knowledge sharing) and related personal factors (i.e. self-efficacy, learning goal orientation, affective commitment, career perspective).

Latent class analysis

## Chapter 5

General discussion

Main conclusions and overarching discussion

Figure 1.2. Overview of chapters.



#### Abstract

Increasingly, research is conducted to explore the relationships among the three parties involved in a TAW construction – the TAW, the client organization and employment agency – and how this relationship can be strengthened by HR instruments. This chapter adds to this stream of literature by studying to what extent TAWs' affective commitment (AC) towards the client organization and employment agency relates to their expectations and their fulfilled expectations regarding offered opportunities for competence development (OfCD) by both organizations, and by exploring to what extent TAWs regard both employment organizations responsible for offering them OfCD. A cross-sectional survey study was conducted among TAWs in the Netherlands (n=449), including quantitative and qualitative analyses. All results of this chapter together revealed that TAWs tend to be focused on the client organization with regard to OfCD. This is the organization to which they feel most affectively committed, that they regard responsible for organizing their OfCD, and where they ask for OfCD. This chapter indicated that TAWs do not yet profit maximally from the triangular employment relationship, and have a rather traditional view on TAW constructions.

#### 2.1 Introduction

As explained in Chapter 1, theoretically, it is advantageous for client organizations, employment agencies *and* temporary TAWs to create a triangular employment construction. It facilitates an optimal distribution of *flexibility* and *security* (flexicurity paradigm, cf. Wilthagen & Tros, 2004) since three rather than two parties are involved (Dekker & Wilthagen, 2014). However, the extent to which these benefits hold true in practice is questionable, as also explained in Chapter 1. More specifically, a triangular employment relationship may lead to more complexity with regard to the 'psychological contract' between the parties as not two but three parties are involved. In the present chapter, it is this psychological contract that is taken as a starting point for investigating TAWs' organizational affective commitment towards their client organization and the employment agency, and for exploring their (fulfilled) expectations of opportunities for competence development.

Building on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), a psychological contract refers to the mutual beliefs, perceptions, and informal obligations between an employer and an employee (Rousseau, 1995). If employees experience favours from their employers, they will develop a psychological obligation to display higher levels of organizational commitment and performance. Since mutual obligations among the parties involved often remain implicit, differences in interpretations of these obligations can easily occur (cf. Chambel & Castenheira, 2012; Lapalme, Simard, & Tremblay, 2011), with 'contract breaches' as a result. TAWs are likely to perceive themselves as having two psychological contracts (i.e. with each of their employment parties, Claes, 2005), which doubles the risk of a discrepancy between expectations or between interpretations of mutual agreements which, in turn, may negatively influence the relationships among the three parties (Lapalme et al. 2011). Specifically, contract breaches may have substantial negative consequences for the organizational commitment TAWs experience (cf. Dekker & Wilthagen, 2014; Gallagher & McLean Parks, 2001) – referring to 'a bond or linking of the individual to the organization' (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990, p.171) – and it may even result in a decrease in performance and job satisfaction due to negative feelings regarding their employer(s) (cf. Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002).

In this chapter we examine the manner and degree to which TAWs' organizational commitment can be explained by their perceptions of the offered opportunities for competence development (OfCD). In doing so, we make two important contributions to HRD theory. *Firstly*, this chapter adds to current research on explaining organizational commitment, by focusing on the specific situation of TAWs. Organizational commitment is seen as a main factor that contributes to a triangular relationship in TAW constructions (cf. Dekker & Wilthagen, 2014), but its dual character (i.e. TAW's commitment towards each of their employment organizations) *and* its relationship with OfCD is underdeveloped. The present chapter examines TAWs' *affective* organizational commitment (further referred to as 'affective commitment', or AC), which refers to 'the emotional attachment to,

identification with, and involvement in an organization' (Meyer et al. 2002, p.21) and is generally viewed as an important predictor of employees' performance (Chambel et al., 2015; Meyer et al., 2002).

Secondly, this chapter examines the extent to which OfCD, being an HR instrument, is perceived as an important return on the TAWs' investment in being involved in a temporary employment situation. Prior to the increase in flexibility, formal employment relationships were implicitly underpinned by a psychological contract that ensured lifetime employment as a reward for employee loyalty and trust (Kornelakis, 2014). However, the fact that lifetime employment in organizations is increasingly being replaced by lateral moves across jobs and organizations (Murphy & Garavan, 2009) calls for new kinds of psychological contracts in which organizations contribute towards the employability of temporary workers (and specifically TAWs) in return for good performance. Since OfCD contributes, theoretically, towards TAW employability (cf. Dekker & Wilthagen, 2014; Thijssen, van der Heijden, & Rocco, 2008; Veld, Semeijn, & van Vuuren, 2015), it helps create a focus on the long term rather than the short term because of the often limited contracts. Moreover, offering TAWs OfCD contributes towards their feeling of being equally treated compared with permanent employees, which results in a positive workplace atmosphere and in turn also contributes towards the organizational commitment of permanent employees (cf. Connelly, Gallagher, & Wilkin, 2014). Based on these aspects, it was expected that OfCD would be perceived by TAWs as a favour – a return on their investment – in response to which they would develop higher levels of AC. As such, following Håkansson and Isidorsson (2015) it is expected that OfCD is part of the employment relationship TAWs have with their employment agency, as well as part of the management relationship TAWs have with their client organization. These expectations resulted in two hypotheses tested in this chapter. Below is the first hypothesis, in line with the conclusions of Lapalme et al. (2011) on the parallel character of the two separate psychological contracts that TAWs have with their employment organizations:

**Hypothesis 1:** The higher the TAWs' expectations and fulfilled expectations of OfCD offered by their *client organization | employment agency*, the higher their AC towards this *client organization | employment agency*.

Inherent to the triangular character of the TAW construction, a subsequent exploration was carried out on the cross-effects of expectations and fulfilled expectations of OfCD by *the one* organization, on TAWs' level of AC towards *the other* organization. Ideally, employment agencies serve as the linking pin between client organizations and TAWs, by dealing with the TAW's administration and working conditions (cf. van Breugel, van Olffen, & Olie, 2005). If TAWs feel their employment agency is taking care of them in terms of OfCD, they may, on the one hand, develop a psychological

obligation to display higher levels of AC towards the *client organization* as this will ultimately benefit their employment agency. On the other hand, when TAWs experience favours from their client organization in terms of OfCD, this may enhance their AC towards their employment agency, since it facilitated the opportunity to work at the client organization in the first place. As such, the second hypothesis reads:

**Hypothesis 2:** The higher the TAWs' expectations and fulfilled expectations of OfCD offered by the *client organization and vice versa*, the higher their AC towards the *employment agency and vice versa*.

The extent to which TAWs regard their employment parties and themselves as responsible for offering them OfCD was also explored, as this information might deepen our understanding of TAWs' expectations regarding OfCD. As such, this chapter aims to examine if TAWs' (fulfilled) expectations of OfCD and their AC towards both of their employment parties are related, as well as clarifying these results. To this end, the following *exploratory* research question was formulated:

**Exploratory RQ:** To what extent do TAWs regard their client organization and/or their employment agency as responsible for offering OfCD?

Figure 2.1 visually presents the triangular relationship of a TAW construction (cf. Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015), provided with the core concepts being studied: AC and OfCD.

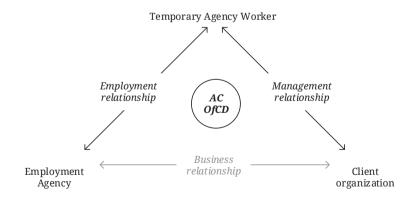


Figure 2.1. Triangular relationship of a TAW construction (cf. Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015), illustrated with the concepts being studied: affective commitment (AC) and opportunities for competence development (OfCD).

Note. The business relationship was not part of this study.

The Chambel and Castenheira (2012) study was used as starting point for the present study. Chambel and Castenheira found that training had a positive influence on TAWs' AC, and we wanted to make some additions to their empirical work. *Firstly*, in this chapter, competence development refers to the process of acquiring competencies by means of formal and informal learning activities (Froehlich, Beausaert, Segers, & Gerken, 2014; Svensson, Ellström, & Åberg, 2004; Tynjälä, 2008), not just training (see Chapter 1 section 1.2.5 for an explanation of formal and informal learning). This chapter's focus on *expectations* and *fulfilled expectations* of OfCD implies a focus on planned and conscious learning activities. As such, this chapter explicitly concentrates on *deliberate* informal learning activities, leaving aside the more implicit and reactive informal learning activities.

Secondly, the chapter expands upon the Chambel and Castenheira study (2012) by focusing on TAWs' perceptions instead of actual offered opportunities. We believe that it is primarily the level of perceived OfCD that influences TAWs' AC, as this level aligns with the core of psychological contract theory, as it is about one's perceptions of implicit and explicit mutual promises rather than the written contract and written policies (cf. Cassar & Briner, 2011; Rousseau, 1995). In other words, it is this level of perception that makes the triangular relationship of a TAW construction more complex than a two-way employment relationship in which only one employer is involved.

Previous studies on the influence of expected and fulfilled (or breached) psychological contracts on employees' AC in general, show that AC is likely to decrease when employees experience violation resulting from a breach (Casser & Briner, 2011). Obuya and Rugimbana (2014), however, argue that expectations need to be exceeded to have a positive influence on employees' AC. If expectations are simply fulfilled as expected, they will be 'taken for granted' and will not have any significant impact. As such, the results of these previous studies indicate a relationship between OfCD and AC, but do not provide insights in the mechanisms between *OfCD* and AC specifically, let alone *TAWs*.

Thirdly, this chapter builds on the Chambel and Castenheira study (2012) in that we include the relationship between TAWs' perceptions of OfCD and AC offered by both of their employment parties. Inherent to the triangular character of the TAW construction, Lapalme et al. (2011) confirmed that TAWs are involved in two different social exchange relationships, resulting in two different psychological contracts that may evolve parallel to each other.

### 2.2 Method

This chapter included a survey research, in which both quantitative and qualitative data has been collected. Specifically, it included an explanatory and a subsequent exploratory part, in which the qualitative analysis (answering the exploratory research question) aimed to clarify the quantitative data (testing hypotheses 1 and 2).

## 2.2.1 Participants

In total, 6709 TAWs were invited to participate in a survey study. All of them were employed via the same employment agency, and worked in a variety of client organizations. A total of 449 TAWs completed a survey (6.7% response rate). The participating TAWs (33% male) all worked in service organizations in different sectors. Their ages ranged from 18 to 70 years old (*M*=41 years, *SD*=14 years). The participants' level of education ranged from primary or pre-secondary vocational education to PhD, but most participants (64.3%) had completed an applied university programme, university programme, or PhD. Furthermore, participants' contracts with the employment agency ranged from zero-eight hours a week, to a full-time contract (*Mode* = 33-40 hours a week), and participants' employment at the client organization ranged from less than one up to three months, to more than one year (*Mode* = more than one year).

### 2.2.2 Instruments

For both the quantitative and the qualitative parts of this study, data was gathered by means of one survey. This survey comprised both validated scales and self-constructed questions. Open questions were also added allowing TAWs to motivate their answers.

# Affective commitment

To measure AC, the Dutch version of the affective commitment scale of the Three-Component-Model by Allen and Meyer (1990) was used, a model developed by Jak and Evers (2010). It included five statements, to be scored on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 to 5, including 'this statement applies to me: (1) 'very much', (2) 'much', (3) 'moderately', (4) 'a little', and (5) 'a very little". Participants were asked to respond to these five statements first with regard to their client organization, and then with regard to the employment agency. For example, if the employment agency's statement was 'I experience my employment agency's problems as my own', the client organization statement was 'I experience my client organization's problems as my own'. Both AC scales showed good reliability (AC<sub>client organization</sub>:  $\alpha = .85$ ; AC<sub>employment agency</sub>:  $\alpha = .93$ ).

## *Expectations of opportunities for competence development*

Each respondent was asked the following question individually: 'I expected my current client organization / employment agency...' (a) '...to offer me OfCD' (b), '... not to offer me OfCD' or (c) 'I had no expectations'.

# Fulfilled expectations of opportunities for competence development

For each organization the following question was asked individually: 'To what extent did the client organization / employment agency meet your expectations regarding offered OfCD?' 'My client organization / employment agency offered me (a) 'fewer opportunities than I expected beforehand', (b) '...the same opportunities as I expected beforehand', or (c) '...more opportunities than I expected beforehand'.

## Responsibility for offering opportunities for competence development

By means of an open question, participants could indicate who they considered responsible for offering them OfCD: either the client organization, or the employment agency, or both of them. This question was formulated explicitly as an open question to give participants the opportunity to explain their statement.

### 2.2.3 Procedure

The survey was distributed using Qualtrics, an online software programme. Before the actual data gathering, two pilot studies were conducted among TAWs of the participating employment agency. The first pilot study was conducted to check the comprehensibility of the survey. TAWs from one client organization completed the survey (n=9) during a one-hour face-to-face meeting in which the TAWs were asked to complete the questionnaire and immediately reflect on it aloud. Based on this pilot study, some questions in the survey were tightened and aligned with the jargon that was usual for TAWs working for the employment agency in question. For some questions (i.e. questions asking for participants' background information), answer categories were added or omitted. A second pilot study was subsequently conducted among TAWs from different client organizations (n=83) to check if the scales included in the survey could be used for the specific population of *TAWs* instead of permanent employees. No significant changes were made to the survey as reliability and validity checks showed acceptable results.

### 2.2.4 Analyses

# Testing hypotheses 1 and 2

To test hypotheses 1 and 2, quantitative analyses were conducted. Prior to these analyses, the items of AC were recoded, to align a high score of the scale with a high score of AC. Furthermore, the items on TAWs' expectations and fulfilment were recoded into dummy variables, so that multiple regression analyses could be carried out (see later in this section for more information).

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to measure if AC towards the client organization and AC towards the employment agency were indeed different constructs. This EFA had an exploratory character; in other words no restrictions were set for the number of factors.

Moreover, an oblique rotation was used, since a relationship was expected between AC towards the two organizations, given the triangular character of the employment relationship (e.g. Liden et al. 2003). Table 2.1 presents the factor loadings of all items and shows that items one to five loaded on the factor representing the client organization, whereas items six to ten loaded on the factor representing the employment agency. These two factors resulted in 63.71% total explained variance. As such, the EFA confirmed that AC towards the client organization and AC towards the employment agency are two different constructs.

**Table 2.1**Oblique rotated factor matrix of items measuring Affective Commitment towards the Client Organization and towards the Employment Agency

	Fa	ctor
	Client organization	Employment agency
1. I feel as if client organization's problems are my own	0.523	015
2. I feel a strong sense of belonging to my client organization	0.801	015
3. I feel 'emotionally attached' to this client organization	0.782	025
4. I feel like 'part of the family' at my client organization	0.742	029
5. This client organization means a lot to me	0.807	0.038
6. I feel as if employment agency's problems are my own	0.015	0.731
7. I feel a strong sense of belonging to my employment agency	038	0.903
8. I feel 'emotionally attached' to this employment agency	0.016	0.866
9. I feel like 'part of the family' at my employment agency	010	0.892
10. This employment agency means a lot to me	023	0.861

Note. N =449.

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to measure the influence of TAWs' expectations and the fulfilment of offered OfCD (independent variables) on the level of AC towards the client organization and towards the employment agency (dependent variables). Firstly, analyses were run for each organization separately (hypothesis 1). Specifically, three models were run: In model 1, only control variables age and level of education were included. In model 2 the expectations of offered OfCD as predictors for the level of AC towards the corresponding organization were added as predictors to the regression model, and in model 3, the fulfilled expectations were also added as predictors to the regression model. Secondly, we measured the

extent to which expected and fulfilled OfCD offered *by one organization* influenced the level of AC *towards the other organization* (hypothesis 2). Again, the same models were run, presented as models a, b and c.

A Bonferroni correction was applied (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) because of the increased risk of Type I error as a consequence of the different tested multiple regression models. An alpha level of 2.5% was thus specified.

### Answering the exploratory research question

To answer the exploratory research question, the answers to the open question were analysed qualitatively. The data was analysed bottom up. Specifically, codes were provided indicating divisions of responsibilities, resulting in different categories. This categorization was done by means of open, axial and selective coding (cf. Boeije, 2010), and the procedure was checked by, and negotiated with the team of researchers. According to Boeije (2010), open coding refers to the process of segmenting the data into meaningful fragments, coding these meaningful pieces and comparing these pieces with each other. Without restrictions, each fragment was labelled with a code that covered the content of the fragment. In this chapter, the complete answer of a participant was used as a starting point for analysis. The stage of open coding resulted in a total of thirteen codes covering different divisions of responsibilities regarding TAWs' OfCD. Next, the stage of axial coding refers to the process of making connections between categories or splitting them, and checking to what extent each code is unique (Boeije, 2010). This axial coding stage resulted in ten categories; four categories were combined into one category as the nuances between them appeared to be too small to distinguish them. Then, the stage of selective coding includes the process of looking for an overall structure of the codes (Boeije, 2010). This stage resulted in a final set of six categories distinguishing different divisions of responsibilities regarding TAWs' OfCD. Again, two categories were integrated with another category, and two other categories were deleted after extensive discussion as these categories did not align with the overall structure. The few answers in these categories were interpreted again and could be replaced into another category.

#### 2.3 Results

# 2.3.1 Expected and fulfilled OfCD and TAWs' AC

*Descriptive statistics* 

Table 2.2 presents the zero-order correlations between the independent and dependent variables. Mean values (SD) are also presented for the independent variables. The mean values of AC showed that, on average, TAWs felt more affectively committed towards their client organization compared to their employment agency, and there appeared to be a significant positive correlation between

TAWs' AC towards the client organization and towards the employment agency. Table 2.3 shows primarily positive significant relations between the independent variables, and between the dependent and independent variables. As an exception, TAWs' expectations of OfCD from the client organization negatively related to their AC towards the client organization, meaning that the less OfCD they expected to get at the client organization, the higher their AC at the client organization or the other way around. Together, the zero-order correlations primarily show indications for parallel relationships between expectations and fulfilled expectations of OfCD and AC towards the corresponding organization.

In addition to Table 2.2, Table 2.3 presents the distributions of the answers (percentages) for the participating TAWs regarding their expectations and fulfilled expectations of offered OfCD.

Table 2.3 shows three aspects in particular: 1) The client organization is seen by most participants as the organization that should have offered them OfCD; 2) For both organizations, it appeared that, relatively speaking, many people *did not know* what to expect regarding OfCD, and this indistinctness was even larger for the employment agency as compared to the client organization; and 3) Compared to the client organization, relatively speaking, many TAWs were surprised by the employment agency with regard to OfCD, by answering that they got *more* opportunities to develop their competencies at the employment agency than they initially expected.

Expected and fulfilled OfCD and AC towards the corresponding organization

Table 2.4 shows the results of the multiple regression analyses measuring the relationship between

TAWs' expectations and fulfilled expectations of OfCD, and their AC towards the corresponding

organization (hypothesis 1).

TAWs' AC towards the client organization appeared to be significantly associated with their expectations of OfCD from the client organization (model 2:  $\beta$  = .22, p<.001; model 3:  $\beta$  = .26, p<.001). The TAWs' AC towards the client organization also appeared to be significantly associated with getting *more* OfCD from the client organization than initially expected (model 3:  $\beta$  =.18, p<.001). In all three models, the control variables 'age' and 'level of education' showed no significant associations with TAWs' AC towards the client organization.

TAWs' AC towards the employment agency also appeared to be significantly associated with their expectation of getting OfCD from the employment agency (model 2:  $\beta$  = .11, p=.026; model 3:  $\beta$  = .21, p<.001). The TAWs' AC towards the employment agency appeared to be significantly associated with getting *more* OfCD than was initially expected from the employment agency (model 3:  $\beta$  = .24, p<.001). Moreover, *less* OfCD from the employment agency than was expected had a significantly *negative* effect on TAWs' AC towards the employment agency (model 3:  $\beta$  = -.15, p=.003). As such, for both organizations hypothesis 1 was accepted: the higher the TAWs' expectations *and* fulfilled expectations of OfCD, the higher their AC towards the corresponding organization.

In all three models, there appeared to be a significant negative relationship between the TAWs' academic educational level and their AC towards the employment agency (model 1:  $\beta$  = -.32, p<.001; model 2:  $\beta$  = -.30, p =.001; model 3:  $\beta$  = -.30, p=.001).

Expected and fulfilled OfCD of the one organization and AC towards the other organization Table 2.5 shows the results of the multiple regression analyses measuring the relationship between TAWs' expectations and fulfilled OfCD for the one organization, and their AC towards the other (hypothesis 2). TAWs' AC towards the client organization appeared to be significantly associated with their expectation of getting OfCD at the employment agency, although this significant result only appeared in model c (model c:  $\beta$  = .13, p=.018). Furthermore, TAWs' AC towards the client organization appeared to be significantly associated with getting more OfCD than initially expected from the employment agency (model c:  $\beta$  = .16, p=.002). Control variables 'age' and 'level of education' showed no significant associations with TAWs' AC towards the client organization.

TAWs' AC towards the employment agency appeared to be significantly associated with their fulfilled expectation of getting more OfCD from the client organization than initially expected (model c:  $\beta$  = .11, p=.021). Furthermore, people with an academic level of education have lower AC towards the employment agency than people with the lowest level of education (reference available. Model a:  $\beta$  = -.32, p<.001; model b:  $\beta$  = -.33, p<.001; model c:  $\beta$  = -.32, p<.001). Given these results, hypothesis 2 is accepted.

Zero-order correlations (Spearman) between TAWs' expectations of OfCD, their fulfilment of OfCD, and their Affective Commitment towards both organizations Table 2.2

)								
	1	2	3	4	2	9	Mean	SD
Dependent variables								
1. AC towards the client organization							3.47	0.82
2. AC towards the employment agency	0.37**						2.32	0.81
Independent variables¹								
3. Expectations of OfCD at the client	* *	2						
organization	07:-	04						
4. Expectations of OfCD at the employment	٦٥ -	2	**10					
agency	50.	# 0	4					
5. Fulfilled expectations of OfCD at the client	****	**	**	0				
organization	07.	OT:	. FT.	60.				
6. Fulfilled expectations of OfCD at the	n u	****	70	****	10**			
employment agency	50.	17:	ò:	07:	CT:			
NT-4- NT - 440								

diven the measurement level of the independent variables, descriptive statistics are presented in terms of percentages. See Table 2.3. p < .01, two tailed. Note. N = 449.

Table 2.3

Percentages of participants' answers with regard to their expectations and fulfilled expectations of offered Opportunities for Competence Development (OfCD), split for both employment organizations

	Client Organization	Employment Agency
Expectations		
Yes, I expected OfCD	45.2%	21.4%
I did not have any expectations about getting OfCD	42.8%	61.5%
No, I expected not to get OfCD	12.0%	17.1%
Fulfilled expectations		
I got less OfCD than I expected	24.3%	18.9%
I got the same OfCD as I expected	26.6%	51.0%
more OfCD than I expected	19.2%	30.1%
Note, N =449.		

Results of the multiple regression analyses (Betas) measuring the influence of (fulfilled) expectations of OfCD on Affective Commitment towards the corresponding organization

The state of the s	Client	Client Organization <sup>†</sup>	on⁺	Emplo	Employment Agency <sup>††</sup>	ηcy <sup>††</sup>
Model	1	2	3	1	2	3
Expectations						
1. Yes, I expected OfCD		.22**	.26**		.11*	.21**
2. No, I did not expect OfCD		07	04		04	90:-
Fulfilled expectations						
a. I got less OfCD than I expected			60			15*
b. I got more OfCD than I expected			.18**			.24**
Control variables						
i. Age	04	02	01	80.	60.	.05
ii. Level of education						
Lower secondary vocational education	60.	.10	60.	.05	.04	.07
Senior general secondary education, pre-university	90	05	07	11	60:-	08
education						
Senior secondary vocational education and training	.10	.11	.10	90	05	03
Higher professional education, bachelor in	01	00.	01	23	20	20
academic higher education						
Master in academic higher education, PhD	03	04	.04	32**	30**	30**
22	60	00	7	00	5	76
N- n2 A	co.	60.	.T.	00.	01.	01.
$R^{\omega} \Delta$		90.	.U5		70.	.08

Note. N= 449. Model 1: only the control variables were included in the model as predictors of AC. Model 2: the expectations of offered OfCD were added to the regression model as predictors of AC. Model 3: Fulfilled expectations were added to the regression model.

Overall model results: Model 1:  $R^2$  = 03, F(6,442) = 2.073, p = .055; Model 2:  $R^2$ =.09, F(8,440) = 5.304, p < .001; Model 3:  $R^2$ =.14, F(10,438) = 6.857, p <

 $^{+}$ Overall model results: Model 1:  $R^2$  = 08, F(6,442) = 6.721, p < 0001; Model 2:  $R^2$  = 10, F(8,440) = 5.959, p < 0001; Model 3:  $R^2$  = 16, F(10,438) = 9.648, p < 0001

\* $p \le .025$ , two tailed. \*\* $p \le .01$ , two tailed.

Results of the multiple regression analyses (Betas) measuring the influence of (fulfilled) expectations of OfCD on Affective Commitment towards the other organization Table 2.5

3	Continuent towards the other organization						
AC	AC towards the →	Client	Client Organization†	n†	Employ	Employment Agency <sup>#</sup>	y <sup>††</sup>
Mα	Model ↓	а	p	С	а	p	С
$Ex_l$	Expectations						
Ţ.	Yes, I expected OfCD		.10	.13*		80.	.10
2.	No, I did not expect OfCD		08	60:-		60:-	08
File	Euffilled exportations						
, rd	I got less OfCD than I expected			.02			03
p.	I got more OfCD than I expected			.16*			.11*
Ö	Control variables						
i	Age	04	04	90:-	.08	.08	60.
ΞÏ	Level of education						
	Lower secondary vocational education	60.	60.	.11	.05	.05	.04
	Senior general secondary education, pre-university	90:-	04	03	11	11	12
	education						
	Senior secondary vocational education and training	.10	.12	.14	90	07	07
	Higher professional education, bachelor in	01	.02	.00	23	23	24
	academic higher education						
	Master in academic higher education, PhD	03	00.	.00	32**	33**	32**
				!			
$R^2 \wedge$	~	.03	.05	.07	80.	.10	.12
4	7		20.	70:		20.	20.

Note. N= 449. Model a: only the control variables were included in the model as predictors of AC. Model b: the expectations of offered OfCD added to the regression model as predictors of AC. Model c: Fulfilled expectations were added to the regression model.

Toverall model results: Model a:  $R^2 = 03$ , F(6.442) = 2.073, p = .055; Model b:  $R^2 = .05$ , F(8.440) = 2.737, p = .006; Model C:  $R^2 = .07$ , F(10.438) = 3.204, p = .006; Model D:  $R^2 = .07$ , P(10.438) = .07= .001

<sup>&</sup>quot;Overall model results: Model a:  $R^2 = .08$ , F(6,42) = 6.721, p < .001; Model b:  $R^2 = .10$ , F(8,440) = 6.252, p < .001; Model c:  $R^2 = .12$ , F(10,438) = 5.771, p < .001; Model b:  $R^2 = .10$ , F(10,438) = 10, F(10,438) = 10,

<sup>\*</sup> $p \le .025$ , two tailed. \*\* $p \le .01$ , two tailed.

## 2.3.2 Organizations' responsibilities for offering OfCD

Subsequently, TAWs' perceptions about which organization should facilitate them with OfCD were explored, in order to deepen our understanding about the relationships between TAW's expectations of OfCD and their AC towards both of their employment parties (exploratory research question). Table 2.6 shows the distributions of TAWs' different perceptions. It appeared that TAWs have diverse opinions about this issue. Eventually, six different categories of shared and individual responsibilities were distinguished, showing that the participants' answers were more nuanced than just stating that either the client organization, or the employment agency, or both of them are responsible for offering them OfCD. Most participants (44%) assigned the responsibility for offering OfCD to their client organization. One of the main arguments that TAWs gave for this answer was that their client organization had a better picture of their work progress and their performance in practice compared to the employment agency, as they were physically present at the client organization most of their time. Participants also argued that the client organization was better able to organize tailor-made CD activities. They also believed that they 'contributed' most to the client organization, giving the client organization a certain responsibility to offer them something valuable 'in return'.

Twelve per cent of the participants assigned the responsibility for offering OfCD primarily to the employment agency. Most of the TAWs argued that the employment agency is their official employer, which gives them the responsibility to offer TAWs OfCD. Participants also argued that the employment agency benefits from well-educated and well-qualified employees as this helps them place an employee in a new job after having finished another. A group of 29% considers that the employment agency and the client organization have a shared responsibility to seek OfCD. The main argument for this shared responsibility is that both organizations benefit from a well-educated employee (instead of the employment agency alone).

Apart from these three categories, two other categories were distinguished, referring to TAWs' own role in looking for OfCD. A minority of 6% of the participants stated that looking for OfCD is the task of *all* parties involved, including TAWs themselves. Another 4% argued that this is primarily their own task, based on the argument that employees are responsible for organizing and building their own career. Lastly, 5% of the participants said they do not see any OfCD at all. Despite the fact that this category does not refer to a certain responsibility, we believe it is important to take this group into account as a serious signal of the difficult and sometimes unclear situation in which they are involved.

 Table 2.6

 Division of responsibilities in offering Opportunities for Competence Development

Division of responsibilities in offering Opportunities for competence Development	เกษาและเน	
Who is responsible for offering opportunities for	Percentage	Example quote
competence development?		
It is primarily the task of the client organization	44%	"I have a two-year contract at this client organization, so I believe
		the client organization should invest in my capacities."
		(participant 28)
It is primarily the task of the employment agency	12%	"Officially, I work for the employment agency, so it is their
		responsibility. I do have another employer [i.e. the client
		organization], but this employer could be temporary. I hope to
		work for a longer period for [the employment agency]."
		(participant 400)
It is the shared responsibility of both employment organizations	29%	"Both organizations benefit from my efforts, so it is positive for
		both of them if I develop myself and feel well in my job."
		(participant 300)
It is the shared responsibility of the client organization, the	%9	"An employer should take partial responsibility for your [i.e. the
employment agency and the TAW him/herself.		employee] development. The rest is your own responsibility and
		depends on what you want to invest in yourself." (participant 227)
It is the TAW's own responsibility.	4%	"It is mainly my own responsibility to see opportunities, or to ask
		about the possibilities for development'(participant 209)
'I do not see any OfCD'	2%	None of the them [i.e. the employment organizations] have
		offered me opportunities to follow a course." (participant 322)
Note. N=449.		

#### 2.4 Discussion

AC is perceived as the main factor that contributes to a triangular relationship in Temporary Agency Work (TAW) constructions (cf. Dekker & Wilthagen, 2014). The present chapter aimed to expand upon studies that investigated how TAWs' AC can be explained. This aim was based on the premise that TAWs are a particular group of employees that are crucial for many organizations, and for our economies, although they have their own HR dilemmas and, as such, deserve particular attention in HRD research. Specifically, this chapter: (1) examined the role of expectations and fulfilled expectations of opportunities for competence development (OfCD) on TAWs' AC towards the employment agency and towards their client organization (hypotheses 1 and 2), and (2) explored the extent to which TAWs regard their client organization and/or their employment agency as responsible for offering OfCD (exploratory research question).

With regard to hypothesis 1, TAWs' expectations of getting OfCD from the client organization was positively related to their AC towards the client organization. Our results also indicated that eventually getting more OfCD than was initially expected contributed positively to TAWs' AC towards the client organization, which is in line with Obuya and Rugimbana (2014). Regarding the employment agency, comparable effects were found, although the positive effects of TAWs' expectations of OfCD from the employment agency on their AC towards the employment agency were smaller. Instead, the effect of exceeded expectations from the employment agency was larger; if TAWs' expectations of OfCD from the employment agency were exceeded, this related positively to their AC towards the employment agency. Moreover, getting less OfCD from the employment agency than expected beforehand was negatively related to TAWs' AC towards the employment agency, whereas this effect was not found for the client organization. It seems the TAWs' AC towards the employment agency was more easily affected by disappointment with the offered OfCD from the employment agency, as compared to AC towards the client organization. These different effects nevertheless confirmed Lapalme et al. (2011)'s conclusion that parallel relationships exist between expected and fulfilled OfCD, and TAWs' AC towards the corresponding organization. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was accepted.

With regard to hypothesis 2, our results showed smaller but positive effects of TAWs' expectations of OfCD from the one organization on their AC towards the other organization. As such, hypothesis 2 was also accepted. The more the TAWs expected to get OfCD from the *employment agency*, the higher their AC towards the *client organization*. Besides, the *more* OfCD TAWs got from the employment agency, the higher their AC towards the client organization. With regard to AC towards the employment agency, a significant small but *positive* effect was found of TAWs' exceeded expectations of OfCD from the client organization. Although the cross-effects were rather small in both models, they are interesting in view of the triangular relationship. It implies

that when TAWs have the expectation that their employment agency will take good care of them, their AC towards the client organization also increases and vice versa.

With these findings, this chapter underscores the call for research on psychological contracts for flexible employees and for TAWs specifically. 'Traditional' psychological contracts, that is, in which employee loyalty and trust in organizations are reciprocated by *life time employment*, no longer apply for the majority of the workforce nowadays. The main challenge for HRD practitioners and HRD researchers is to find out how organizations can contribute towards TAWs' *employability* in return for their performances. Instead of viewing the alignment of HRD practice with *organizational* performance as a starting point, HRD professionals should focus on employee benefits as a means to reconcile organizations' demands for flexibility of on the one hand, and employee security needs on the other (Kornelakis, 2014). This chapter provides clues for HRD practitioners to how they can achieve this by means of offering TAWs OfCD. Concrete examples are provided in section 2.4.2.

In addition to the relationship between OfCD and AC, this chapter showed significant negative relations between the academic level of education and TAWs' AC towards the employment agency – both in the parallel model and in the cross-relations model. No significant relationship was found between the academic level of education and AC towards the client organization. These results are comparable with the results of Morf, Arnhold and Staffelbach (2014). A significant negative relationship was found in their study between highly-educated TAWs and their commitment towards the employment agency, whereas this effect was not the case towards the client organization. It could be that highly-educated employees do not want to commit to the employment agency as they see their involvement in the triangular relationship as a short-term solution and feel confident in finding another job – a temporary job without interference from the employment agency, or even a permanent job – given their well-developed skills and knowledge.

With regard to the exploratory research question, this chapter showed that TAWs have diverse opinions with regard to the responsibility for offering OfCD. The majority of them (44%) regarded their client organization as solely responsible for offering them opportunities to develop their competencies. Another 12 per cent assigned this responsibility primarily towards the employment organization. This indicates that many TAWs do not seem to recognize the potential advantage that a TAW construction can have for them: the fact that they have *two* employment organizations they can ask for OfCD and that can possibly collaborate in facilitating their OfCD. Interestingly, participants have different arguments regarding the client organization's responsibility for offering OfCD for compared to that of the employment agency. Whereas the employment agency's responsibility for offering OfCD was primarily related to the official contract and written agreements, the responsibility of the client organization was primarily related to

aspects of the psychological contract or the unwritten agreements, in return for TAWs' contribution to, and visibility within, this client organization.

The results of our qualitative analyses regarding the division of responsibilities of OfCD indeed align with the results of the quantitative analyses regarding the relationship between TAWs' expectations and fulfilled expectations of OfCD and their AC towards both organizations. They have higher expectations from the client organization regarding OfCD and also assign the client organization as primarily responsible for offering them opportunities. However, the qualitative analyses also showed a nuance on this result, in that only a minority of the participants also considered it their own responsibility (4%), or partly their own responsibility (6%), to seek OfCD. Still, these results contradict with previous research by Veld and colleagues (2015) who concluded that employees perceived offering OfCD to be a *shared responsibility* of both organizations and employees. The current chapter indicated that TAWs, being involved in a *triangular* relationship, do not see this shared responsibility as such, as only a small minority appointed to their own role in looking for these opportunities.

### 2.4.1 Overall conclusions

All results of this chapter together revealed that TAWs tend to be primarily focused on their client organization; it seems as if TAWs consider the psychological contract with the client organization to be more important. This is the organization that most of them regard as responsible for offering them OfCD, and also from which most of them expect to get OfCD. This is the organization for which TAWs have the clearest expectations with regard to OfCD, and for which the effects (explained variances) of expectations and fulfilled expectations of OfCD on TAWs' AC are the largest. TAWs possibly relate CD directly with their work at the client organization, so it results in the assumption they will get OfCD from their client organization. This interpretation might also explain this chapter's result that primarily parallel effects were found between perceived OfCD and AC towards the corresponding organization. And it may also explain two other results. Firstly, the result that only positive parallel relationships were found between expected and fulfilled OfCD and AC towards the client organization, whereas a *negative* parallel relationship was also found between fulfilled OfCD and AC towards the employment agency. And secondly, the fact that slightly stronger crossrelationships were found between TAWs' expectations and fulfilled expectations of OfCD by the employment agency and their AC towards the client organization, as compared to the relationship the other way around.

TAWs possibly feel more familiar with the client organization compared to the employment agency, due to the fact that they are physically present at the client organization most of their time. This may result in TAWs feeling ambiguous towards the employment agency, and therefore having a somewhat hesitant attitude. As such, it seems plausible that exceeded expectations of OfCD offered

by the client organization contribute positively to TAWs' AC towards the client organization (all that is familiar is taken for granted, and this needs to be exceeded to stand out (Obuya & Rugimbana, 2014), whereas TAWs' AC towards the employment agency is easily negatively influenced by aspects such as OfCD (all that disappoints them impairs their AC towards the employment agency). Still, the result that expectations of offered OfCD by the *employment agency* contributed *positively* to TAWs AC towards the *client organization* shows that the role of the employment agency should not be underestimated. This result stresses the potential of the employment agency in offering OfCD, as it does seem to pay off with regard to AC towards the client organization.

Based on our data, it can be argued that TAWs do not know what they can expect from the employment agency when it comes to OfCD. Our qualitative data indicated that TAWs perceive this agency primarily as an institution that takes care of the official contract and the associated written agreements without further warmth, emotion and commitment, and not taking into account facilities for competence development. One explanation for this result might be that, at the moment of data collection, the employment agency in question had just started offering broader OfCD to talented TAWs. As such, it is plausible that many TAWs were not yet familiar with the idea of getting OfCD from their employment agency. However, another explanation for this phenomenon that is in our view even more plausible, is that TAWs might not be aware of their position in a *triangular* relationship and what this situation can bring them. With a primary focus on the client organization, TAWs may see the employment agency as an intermediate agent (cf. Morf et al., 2014) that sometimes may even interfere with their relationship with the client organization, rather than an employer with which they can discuss OfCD.

This latter explanation fits in with a 'traditional' perception of temporary work, with temporary workers being hired to cover short-term absence of permanent staff (cf. von Hippel, Mangum, Greemberger, Heneman, & Skoglind, 1997). However, times have changed and we believe that this traditional picture does not cover the current real-world situation. As described by Håkansson and Isidorsson (2015), the line between TAWs and permanent employees is becoming blurred these days as organizations increasingly hire TAWs for the long/longer term and for jobs that are equal to those done by permanent staff. This also often applied for the participants in our study; the majority of them were employed at a client organization for one year or more, making them a quasi-permanent part of the client organization. As a consequence, we recognize a trend, with client organizations becoming increasingly aware of the fact that they have to offer equal opportunities to their TAWs and their permanent employees (cf. Mitlacher, 2008); employment agencies are also increasingly aware of their role with regard to OfCD. At the same time, TAWs could take their own responsibility in initiating a discussion about the benefits of a TAW construction for them, and the OfCD they get from both of their employment organizations. Strictly

speaking, as TAWs need to maintain their market value, they have a responsibility to continuously develop themselves.

### 2.4.2 Scientific and practical implications

Given the importance of TAWs and TAW constructions for our economies, we believe that we, as HRD researchers and HRD practitioners, need to take the concept of TAW constructions very seriously. Only if both the TAW and the two employment organizations involved feel that they can win something from this situation would a TAW construction indeed be beneficial for all parties, ultimately bringing positive results. Apart from the obvious financial profits for the employment organization and the client organization, this chapter confirmed that TAWs consider getting OfCD to be positive and profitable for themselves.

With regard to scientific HRD research focused on the triangular relationship of TAW constructions, this chapter contributed to theory building of the mutual relationships among TAWs, their client organization and the employment agency. Based on TAWs' AC and the (fulfilled) expectations of OfCD they experienced, this chapter showed that the triangular relationship is not in balance yet. Instead of functioning as an actual triangle with an equal role of two employers, TAWs perceive their employment construction as primary having a relationship with their client organization. The employment agency, instead, is perceived as being a disturbing factor on this relationship rather than that it is one of their employers with all its related responsibilities and opportunities (Figure 2.2).

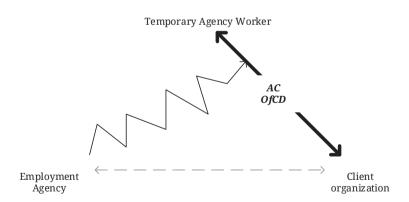


Figure 2.2. Mutual relationships of a TAW construction in terms of affective commitment (AC) and TAWs' (fulfilled) expectations of opportunities for competence development (OfCD), as resulted from this study.

*Note*. The relationship between the employment agency and the client organization (i.e. the business relationship, dotted line) was not part of this study.

As such, this chapter showed that there is much potential in TAW constructions that is not used yet. Future research may further build on these observations by examining how the triangular relationship can be improved so that *all* parties involved strengthen each other and gain maximum profit from this promising employment relationship. With regard to HRD, this could imply that research focuses on exploring which instruments help organizations and TAWs to communicate with one another about each other's expectations and strategies with regard to OfCD. That is, instruments may help to monitor and manage TAWs' competence development so that it (1) contributes to TAWs' employability, that it (2) aligns with the business strategies of a client organization and that it (3) contributes to the employment agency's goals as well. Besides, future HRD research focused on TAWs may take into account the fact that TAWs have different expectations of OfCD of both of their employment parties, as well as that the extent to which these expectations are fulfilled have different effects on the AC towards the employment agency compared to their AC towards the client organization.

With regard to organizational practice, we believe that HRD practitioners can play a crucial role in creating a link between TAWs and their two employment organizations, in turn facilitating a beneficial triangular employment relationship. Specifically, HRD practitioners – both HRD practitioners that work for client organizations and HRD practitioners that work for employment agencies – may actively promote the use of OfCD, rather than using a passive approach that depends on the employee him/herself asking for opportunities. By actively communicating what OfCD a TAW has at both organizations to both TAWs themselves and to their direct managers, TAWs may become more aware of these OfCD, which may result in them making more use of these opportunities. We therefore believe that HRD practitioners can stimulate a TAW to actually make use of these opportunities, eventually contributing to their AC.

As mentioned earlier in this section, we also believe that HRD practitioners can contribute to TAWs' employability by focusing more on employee benefits rather than taking organizational performances as a starting point in their policies. Although this may involve a cultural change in client organizations which cannot be achieved right away, we believe that HRD practitioners can contribute to TAWs' employability immediately through tangible measures. Examples include offering them help with their career orientation (either inside or outside their current client organization), organizing workshops to work on skills that are extra valuable when working in TAW constructions (such as networking skills), and organizing or facilitating meetings between TAWs (either TAWs working at the same client organization, or TAWs having similar functions and working in different client organizations) to share their experiences and dilemmas or to share their expertise and to expand their network.

## 2.4.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

The present chapter has some limitations that need to be addressed. Firstly, this chapter was built on cross-sectional data. Despite the fact that we were able to draw conclusions on the relationships between offered OfCD and TAWs' level of AC, we were not able to draw conclusions on causality among these. Although we can see the difficulty in gathering longitudinal data among TAWs, as they may often shift between organizations, we believe that longitudinal data may provide additional information to confirm, or nuance, the results of the present study. Secondly, we need to be cautious about generalizing the results as the TAWs in this chapter all worked through the same employment agency, and also because of the low response rate in our study (6.7%). Although our sample represented the TAW population of the employment agency in question very well, it was not representative of the total Dutch TAW population. Specifically, our sample included more highlyeducated TAWs than the ratio of highly-educated TAWs in the total population. An explanation for the low response rate can be found in the results of our study. TAWs appeared to be more affectively committed towards their client organization than to their employment agency. Perhaps they did not feel any urgency to fill out this survey as it was related to their employment agency, and because they did not feel really committed to their employment agency. As the low response rate was in line with the response rates of employee satisfaction surveys disseminated annually by the employment agency in question, and also with other studies focused on TAWs, such as Morf et al. (2014), we were confident to present the results, albeit exploratory.

Thirdly, in this chapter, expectations and fulfilled expectations of OfCD were measured by means of one question per variable, with ordinal answer categories. As a result, more traditional data analysis methods were used. Future studies may use more questions per construct and questions with at least five answer categories, to allow for more advanced data analysis techniques. Nevertheless, given the exploratory character of this study, it presented relevant new insights into the relationship between TAWs' expectations and fulfilled expectations of OfCD, and their AC towards both employment organizations.

In addition to these limitations, we have additional suggestions for HRD researchers whose work focuses on TAWs. First of all, it would be interesting to nuance the conclusions of this chapter by differentiating among TAWs. For the present study, we deliberately chose to conduct a large-scale study and to consider all TAWs as one group, in order to reveal a general picture of the situation. By examining the AC of TAWs towards both of their employment organizations simultaneously, and by examining the relationship between perceived OfCD and AC, this chapter responded to the gap in TAW-oriented scientific research about organizational commitment and competence development. Nevertheless, we believe that the archetypal TAW does not exist, and given the rather poorly explained variances found in this study, we believe that a differentiated picture can provide interesting additional information. To contribute to this differentiated picture,

in Chapter 4 we explored 'profiles' of TAWs as based on their informal learning behaviour and related personal factors. Differentiating among *TAWs*, *and* among *TAW constructions*, would make it possible to create a maximally beneficial situation for the TAW himself/herself, and for the two employment organizations.

Furthermore, in addition to the perspective of TAWs themselves it is important to investigate a TAW constructions from the perspective of their employment organizations as well. In the present chapter, we deliberately chose to focus on the perspective of TAWs, as this perspective has been underexposed in TAW research to date (e.g. Soltani & Wilkinson, 2010). In order to create a balanced TAW construction, however, information must be gained from all the parties involved, and these parties must be brought together to discuss their wishes, demands, conditions, and other practical issues regarding OfCD. For this reason, in Chapter 3, bringing all parties together was one of the points of attention.

Organizations worldwide are increasingly expanding their temporary workforces, in which TAWs often dominate. Let us take care of them very well, both in research and in practice. Offering OfCD has the potential to create a beneficial and profitable situation for all three parties involved in a TAW construction, including the TAWs themselves, and the role of employment agencies should not be underestimated in this respect.



### Abstract

Chapter 2 learned that TAW constructions run the risk of not functioning as an actual triangle, with the consequence that the full potential of a TAW construction is missed out. Therefore, chapter 3 aimed at exploring why TAW constructions do not work as an actual triangle, as well as what is needed to utilize the triangular employment relationship better. To do so, the focus was on TAWs' opportunities for competence development (OfCD) at both organizations, which were explored via the theoretical lenses of Psychological Contract (PC) theory and Social Dilemma (SD) theory. A multiple case study was conducted (n=7 cases). By means of group interviews, data was gathered of the three parties involved in a TAW construction – a TAW, his/her direct manager at the client organization, and an HRM-advisor of the employment agency. Altogether, three impeding and four fostering factors of TAWs' CD were distracted. One of these factors included that there is room for improvement regarding the facilitation of informal learning opportunities. On top of all factors, it was concluded that there is a missing psychological contract between the two organizations involved, and that this psychological contract is crucial for closing the triangle and to actually function as such.

### 3.1 Introduction

As mentioned in section 2.4, client organizations and employment agencies are increasingly aware of their role as employer and increasingly take better care of TAWs. Client organizations seem increasingly to be stepping away from the 'traditional' picture of temporary agency work; hiring TAWs for short-term tasks with minimal training on-the-job (cf. Kantelius, 2010). Rather, they hire TAWs for strategic reasons i.e. to fill a knowledge/skills gap and, simultaneously, to be certain that all legal conditions associated with employing a temporary worker are fulfilled, and as a structural solution, i.e. to be able to maintain a competitive position (Chambel, Sobral, Espada, & Curral, 2015; Holst, Nachtway, & Dörre, 2010). Client organizations tend to hire TAWs for the long(er)-term, for jobs that are equal to the work done by permanent staff. As a result, the borders between TAWs and permanent employees get somewhat blurred (Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015). Client organizations value the role of TAWs in their organizations more than in the past, and they recognize that this value can only be created by treating TAWs more equally in comparison to their permanent colleagues – both in terms of primary work conditions and in terms of secondary work conditions like opportunities for professional development (Mitlacher, 2008). Moreover, employment agencies are increasingly aware of the fact that their role as 'employer' includes more than solely supplying workers to client organizations and vice versa, and that they should play a role in offering their TAWs opportunities for competence development (International Confederation of Private Employment Services, 2015). Specifically, following a European Union initiative, bipartite funds have been raised to facilitate and stimulate employment agencies to offer their employees opportunities for competence development (see also text box 1.1, page 12).

However, in practice, the triangular character of a TAW construction still creates particular dilemmas and challenges with regard to human resources (HR, cf. Watkins & Marsick, 2014), and specifically related to the psychological contracts among TAWs and their two employers. One of these dilemmas is how to ensure that TAWs remain satisfied with their job. Despite the positive intentions of both client and employment organizations, TAWs themselves are not always satisfied with their position of 'being a TAW'. They still report lower job satisfaction compared to their permanent colleagues (Wilkin, 2013). Moreover, TAWs perceive the employment agency as an external, sometimes even disturbing party, rather than an agency that functions as a full employer that, for instance, could offer them opportunities for competence development as concluded from Chapter 2. The intentions of both the client organizations and employment agencies do not add up to what is expected by TAWs, especially regarding their position in the triangular employment relationship. As such, TAW constructions run the risk of not functioning as an actual *triangle*, with the consequence that the full potential of a TAW construction and its benefits for all parties involved, is lost.

In this chapter, we *explore why TAW constructions do not work as a triangle as hypothesized in the literature, and we investigate what is needed to better utilize this triangular employment relationship.* Specifically, we explore the mechanisms of the triangular relationship in terms of psychological contract (PC) theory and social dilemma (SD) theory as they focus on the relationships and responsibilities of mutually dependent parties. We achieve this by focusing on TAWs opportunities for competence development (OfCD). OfCD is an essential aspect of a psychological contract which is also of particular importance for TAWs as it contributes to their employability (cf. Dekker & Wilthagen 2014; Thijssen, van der Heijden, & Rocco, 2008; Veld, Semeijn, & van Vuuren, 2015) and, as such, helps to create a focus on their long-term career rather than on their short-term tasks. Moreover, offering TAWs OfCD contributes towards their feeling of being equally treated compared with permanent employees in the client organizations, which results in a positive workplace atmosphere (cf. Connelly, Gallagher, & Wilkin, 2014).

In the next section, we elaborate on TAWs' OfCD, and on the two theoretical lenses of PC theory and SD theory.

### 3.2 Theoretical framework

## 3.2.1 TAWs' competence development

The value of learning at work and competence development is widely acknowledged (cf. de Grip, 2015; Mulder, 2014; Tynjälä, 2013). As described in Chapter 1 section 1.2.5, it is the combination of formal and informal learning activities that are needed for CD to take place (e.g. Froehlich, Beausaert, Segers, & Gerken, 2014; Svensson, Ellström, & Åberg, 2004; Tynjälä, 2008). However, the need to be involved in a combination of different kinds of learning activities is also exactly what makes it complex to organize OfCD for TAWs. Not all OfCD can be part of the formal business contract between the employment agency and a client organization (for further explanation, see section 3.2.2). It is especially difficult to articulate the stimulation of *informal* learning activities prior to drawing up a contract as they require an on-demand approach and negotiation between all parties.

As explained above, client organizations are becoming increasingly aware of the value of TAWs, thereby blurring the border between TAWs and their permanent colleagues. However, different studies show that TAWs are still treated differently in comparison to their permanent colleagues when it comes to competence development. For example, Kantelius (2010) compared TAWs and permanent workers at client organizations with regard to the opportunities offered for learning and training and concluded that TAWs get less opportunities for learning and on-the-job training, and that they perceive a lower level of employability than permanent workers at the client

organizations. Håkansson and Isidorsson (2015) also concluded that TAWs lack OfCD and that this affects their level of job security and their perceptions of employability.

### 3.2.2 TAWs' psychological contracts

As TAWs are increasingly hired by client organizations for longer periods, the mutual relationship of the three parties involved in a triangular employment relationship asks for a longer term approach, creating a more complex situation with regard to the multiple underlying psychological contracts. For two reasons, we argue that PCs of TAWs run a risk of being fragile.

First, TAWs are likely to perceive themselves as having two PCs rather than one (i.e. with each of their employment parties, Claes, 2005), each in its own form and with its own characteristics. Having two distinct PCs doubles the risk of a discrepancy between mutual expectations or between interpretations of mutual agreements, which, in turn, may negatively influence the relationships among TAWs and the two organizations involved (Lapalme, Simard, & Tremblay, 2011).

Second, the relationship between the employment agency and a client organization includes a business relationship (cf. Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015) which is focused on the formal responsibilities of both organizations regarding who is responsible for selection of adequate participants, administration, and other legal responsibilities, and that need to be divided or shared in this triangular employment situation (Davidov, 2004). We expect that there is no PC between these organizations as they do not collaborate on the same work floor on a daily basis. However, as the two organizations do have shared responsibilities that go beyond formal contracts, the TAW might expect that there is a PC among the employment organizations in which expectations are captured about each other's responsibilities for CD. As such, we can imagine that the unwritten and implicit agreements between all three parties are indistinct. There will be clear agreements about the primary working conditions of the TAW, as these are the aspects that the client organization outsources to the employment agency and are written in the formal agreements. However, the secondary working conditions, including OfCD, are not always part of these formal agreements, creating ambiguity for all parties about these conditions. This in turn has the consequence that both PCs will be under pressure and we expect that this will have negative consequences for the organization of TAWs' CD.

### Differentiated PCs

Different kinds of PCs can be distinguished that vary on time frame and performance requirements (Hui, Lee, & Rousseau, 2004): *Transactional* PCs focus on the short term, and primarily contain financial exchanges; *Relational* PCs, focus on the long term and contain social and symbolic aspects; and *Balanced* PCs contain aspects of both perspectives. Together, these are the three most important

forms of PCs in employment situations (Alcover, Rico, Turnley, & Bolino, 2016; Hui et al., 2004; Rousseau, 1995). Moreover, *transitional* arrangements refer to situations where there is no, or no solid PC between an employee and the employer due to a lack of commitment and trust, for example in situations where a sudden event affected this commitment and trust, or in precarious employment situations that can be applicable to short-term temporary employments (Alcover et al., 2016; Hui et al., 2004). Research (e.g. Liden et al., 2003; Chapter 2) indicates that TAWs are more affectively committed to their client organization than to their employment agency. Besides, Chapter 2 showed that TAWs expect more OfCD from their client organization than from their employment agency. Based on these results, with regard to OfCD, we expect that TAWs often experience a more *relational* PC with a client organization, whereas they might experience a more *transactional* PC with their employment agency. Furthermore, as seen from the perspectives of the employers, both client organizations and employment agencies may increasingly strive for a relational PC with their TAWs (cf. CIETT, 2016; Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015), but we expect that employers, in practice, manifest their PCs with TAWs as being more *transactional*.

The fact that TAWs have to deal with lateral moves across jobs and organizations, calls for PCs in which organizations contribute to the *employability* of TAWs in return for good performance (Thijssen et al., 2008) instead of lifetime employment. In addition, TAWs have to deal with two organizations that together act as their employer, creating an extra complexity in mutual responsibilities and expectations. TAWs' PCs differ from the PCs of their permanent colleagues in that TAWs are more in need of developing their employability (e.g. de Cuyper, Notelaers, & de Witte, 2009; Toms, 2014) and as such, in need of continuously developing their competencies.

## 3.2.3 The social dilemma of a TAW construction

Social dilemmas are situations in which more than two parties are interdependent, and in which short-term self-interests conflict with long-term common interests (van Lange, Joireman, Parks, & van Dijk, 2013). They exist in different forms and one of these dilemmas is the *Prisoner's dilemma* (Dawes, 1980). The Prisoner's dilemma refers to the situation in which all parties need each other to reach the maximum result in the long term. However, the chance that everyone involved commits to this solution is smaller than the chance they do not, with the risk of ending up with nothing. As such, it is tempting for each individual to choose the path of not reaching the maximum result, but to opt for the moderate result, having greater certainty that this result will succeed (cf. Messick, Wilke, Brewer, Kramer, Zemke, & Lui, 1983; Sparks, Burleigh, & Barclay, 2016). It is this prisoner's dilemma that is applicable to a TAW construction and, more specifically, to TAWs' CD. In this situation, the maximum result, or the common interest, can be translated as 'adequately educated, employable and flexible employees that are able to perform their job and use their expertise in different kinds of jobs and client organizations', in which TAWs' engagement in OfCD can be seen as

a means to reach this common interest. Logically, to reach the maximum result, all parties need to collaborate and to act like a real triangle with respect to the organization of TAWs' CD. Aligning this with PC theory, to reach the maximum result, a balanced PC is required in which there is room for both the short- and long-term goals of each party, and in which the exchanges include financial, social and symbolic exchanges.

However, in practice, this is more complicated than in theory. Apart from the fact that a triangular employment relationship holds that there are two different PCs to be taken into account. the complexity of this employment situation is also captured in the fact that each party has its own short-term goals, in addition to the long-term ones. For client organizations, it is tempting to only invest in TAWs' CD when it contributes directly to their current task rather than to future tasks or to their future career in general (cf. Fouarge, de Grip, Smits, & de Vries, 2012). Simultaneously, employment agencies do not want to put pressure on the business relationship they have with their client organizations by offering TAWs CD, as this will, on the one hand, interrupt them from working for this client organization and, on the other hand, will make TAWs attractive for other client organizations (Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015). For these reasons, we hypothesize that both organizations opt for the moderate result, being that they solely offer opportunities for CD to TAWs when CD is directly needed. Linking this line of reasoning to the PC theory, this prisoner's dilemma underscores our expectation that both client organizations and employment agencies are tempted to act conform a transactional PC, although they, in theory, strive for a more eligible relational or balanced PC. Likewise, it is expected that TAWs themselves do not request OfCD when they enter a client organization, being aware of the temporality of their stay, creating a feeling of asking for something ridiculous. As such, despite the fact that client organizations increasingly aim to treat their TAWs equally to their permanent employees, and despite that employment agencies also see the relevancy of acting like a full employer, still, the risk of not exploiting the triangular relationship to the fullest with regard to competence development, is present.

Altogether, TAWs are involved in a complex employment situation in which unwritten mutual PC agreements may negatively affect the relationship among the parties involved resulting in transactional PC without warmth and commitment, and in which it is tempting for all parties involved to strive for short-term opportunities instead of looking at the longer term, because the longer term is more uncertain. It necessitates that all parties, together, utilize the full potential of a TAW construction. Currently, there are still challenges to overcome with regard to TAWs' CD, and in this chapter, we examine this by applying both the PC theory and SDT theory to shed another light on the complex triangular relationship.

In the remainder of this chapter, we will first explore the current procedures of the organization of TAWs' CD from the perspectives of the TAWs themselves, their direct managers at the client organizations, and the HRM-advisors of one employment agency for seven triangular

employment cases. Second, we will explore possible impeding and fostering factors so that, in the future, TAWs and their employment parties can maximally benefit from this unique temporary employment construction.

### 3.3 Method

We conducted an exploratory multiple case study. A case study approach enabled us to study the triangular relationship in its natural context and to consider all perspectives in an interrelated fashion (i.e. the perspectives of the TAW, the client organization and the employment agency). Specifically, we analysed seven cases, and in each case a TAW, the direct manager at the client organization, and an employment agency HRM-advisor participated in a group interview.

# 3.3.1 Participants and Procedure

All participants were purposively sampled with the TAWs as a starting point.

## Temporary Agency Workers

Based on questionnaire data gathered among 449 TAWs in the Netherlands, 53 participants were selected for the present study. These participants were selected based on their high score (>23) on Learning Goal Orientation based on VandeWalle's (1997) LGO-scale<sup>3</sup>. LGO was taken as a selection criterion as a high level of LGO indicated that participants had a certain affinity with learning, which would be valuable in a conversation about the organization of CD. However, 35 no longer worked for the same employment agency, or could not be invited due to illness or maternity leave. Therefore, 18 participants were invited for participation in this study; seven accepted.

All TAWs were employed via the same employment agency and worked for a variety of non-profit client organizations. Table 3.1 presents characteristics of each participating TAW. As Table 3.1 shows, the TAWs varied with regard to their age, function, educational background, length of contract with current employment agency and the scope of their contract. However, all of them had worked for a relatively long period for their current client organization via the employment agency in question. In the Appendix, case descriptions are presented for each TAW<sup>4</sup>.

#### Direct managers

Following agreement from the participating TAWs as a starting point, we invited their direct managers to the interview. To select the manager, TAWs were asked with which manager they have a regular (i.e. monthly, or yearly) conversation about their work progress and professional

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> See Chapter 4 for an elaboration of the concept of Learning goal orientation (LGO). Apart from LGO, also other scales were included in this survey. See Chapter 2 for a detailed description of this survey.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> For anonymity reasons, all TAWs were named with a pseudonym.

3

development, and whether this was the person with who they were willing to communicate about possible pitfalls, problems, and needed improvements with regard to, for example, policies or communication. The participating direct managers were all permanently employed and had worked with the participating TAWs from the moment they entered this client organization.

## HRM-advisors

Lastly, the HRM-advisors were invited for the interviews. All were part of the HRM-advisors' team of the same employment agency. The employment agency in question recognizes that the full potential of TAW constructions is not being utilized, and desires to improve its added value to the triangle. This is in line with recent developments at the employment agency. They have developed specific policies for TAWs' CD. Specifically, the employment agency offers different kinds of CD-activities, including free e-learning, workshops, courses and training courses on different themes such as 'creative thinking', and extensive training courses and educational programmes based on the TAWs' personal and professional wishes. All participating HRM-advisors were employed for two to five years at the employment agency. As such, they were familiar with the CD policies as well as with the developments that the employment agency businesses in the Netherlands has experienced in the recent past.



 Table 3.1

 Characteristics of the Participating TAWs

Crim were	ו ואונה אל נו	cital acteristics of the raintifacting 1210s				
Names	Age	Level of education	Function/role	Length	Length employment	Scope employment
				employment	contract client org. that	contract client org.
				contract client org.	is left (months)	(hours/week)
				(years)		
Suzie	54	Senior secondary	Administrative assistant	4	16	32
		vocational education and				
		training				
Josie	47	Academic higher	Communication advisor	1.5	12	16
		education				
Will	57	Academic higher	Instructor traffic	4	9	On paper: 0 (fully flexible)
		education	education			In practice: 0-24
Anna	48	Lower secondary	Community recycling	3.5	18	On paper: min. 16
		vocational education	centre assistant			In practice: differs between
						winter and summer. In
						wintertime: 16
						In summer time: 34-36
Pete	57	Academic higher	Swimming instructor	3.5	16	On paper: 0 (fully flexible)
		education				In practice: 17 on average
Mary	48	Senior secondary	Project secretary	5.5	2	38
		vocational education and			NB. Mary has a	
		training			permanent contract with	
					the employment agency	
Martha	25	Higher professional	Teacher primary	4	8	32
		education	education			

#### 3.3.2 Instruments

The seven cases in this study were explored by means of group interviews. As the purpose of this study was to investigate the total *triangular* relationship with all its perspectives taken into account, we wanted to give all parties involved a voice and give them the opportunity to become aware of, and react to, each other's viewpoints. These conditions could best be met with group interviews. The advantage of organizing group interviews above individual interviews is that participants can react to each other and, together, can come up with ideas that would not have been elucidated if participants were interviewed individually (Frey & Fontana, 1991; Kitzinger, 1994). According to Schatzmann and Straus (1973, as cited in Frey & Fontana, 1991) this is of particular relevance when the relationships between participants are complex and in which their views with regard to the topic of interest may be diverse, which was expected to be the case in our study. In addition, in group interviews participants obtain feedback on their views by hearing the other participants' views, and they have time to think before they speak or react. As such, their responses are better thought through compared to an individual interview (Frey & Fontana, 1991).

The interviews were semi-structured based on three main themes:

- 1. What is the current procedure for organizing CD? This discussion was led by the TAW's answer to a preliminary question: "can you describe your most recent development question?". This recent experience created a concrete situation to discuss in retrospect. As such, these recent experiences contributed to the collection of actual stories (cf. Lichtman, 2013) and helped to make meaning of participants' statements during the interviews.
- What should be avoided when organizing CD for TAWs according to all three perspectives?
   Participants discussed which impeding factors they experienced in the organization or facilitation of CD in TAW constructions.
- 3. What is the ideal situation for organizing CD according to all three perspectives? Participants discussed which fostering factors all parties experienced related to CD, and which conditions are met by all parties for making CD successful.

Based on these three questions, all parties were invited to shed light on the organization of TAWs' CD from their own perspective.

The group interviews were conducted in Autumn 2016. Each interview lasted between sixty and ninety minutes, and they took place at the client organizations as this was, in all cases, the location that two of the three respondents (the TAW and their direct manager) had their physical workplace. In all interviews, the author of this dissertation was the interviewer and all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

## 3.3.3 Analysis

We conducted narrative analysis using a thematic approach (cf. Riessmann, 2008), as this is considered appropriate for studying "phenomena that are less artificial and more reflective of an individual's construct and contextual organization of experience" (Smith, 2000, p.314). It permits analysis of each case by means of the TAW's particular and personal situation, and to take the whole interview as a point of reference (i.e. a holistic approach) rather than isolated parts of this interview (Lichtman, 2013). As such, the different perspectives of all stakeholders (i.e. *subjective experiences* of individuals, cf. Smith, 2000) could be taken into account, as well as the *particular organizational contexts* in which the TAWs worked.

Given the exploratory character of this study, an *inductive* thematic approach was used for the narrative analysis: themes were distracted from the raw data without the limitations set by structured methodologies (Thomas, 2006). First, the data was segmented along the three main topics of the interview (see section 3.3.2). A data-matrix was produced in which the perspectives of the different stakeholders were explicated. Next, based on participants' statements, themes were extracted, indicating various barriers and enablers of the organization of CD in TAW constructions. Supported by participant quotes, the themes were discussed within the team of researchers. Inherent to the inductive approach of the analysis, the context of all cases were taken into account for defining these themes (cf. Lichtman, 2013).

We conducted a number of validity procedures to increase the credibility our data analysis (cf. Creswell & Miller, 2000). First of all, *case descriptions* are presented in the appendix to explain the situations of all seven cases and, as such, to enhance the transparency of our analyses (cf. Geertz, 1975). These descriptions were checked by two other researchers of our research team based on the case transcripts. Second, after establishing the preliminary themes of barriers and enablers of CD, all themes were thoroughly and critically discussed with one of the researchers of our research team and with an independent fellow researcher. Specifically, these checking researchers interrogated the author of this dissertation about the formulation and foundation of the themes to ensure that the argumentation for defining these themes was significant and meaningful.

Third, *disconfirming evidence* was sought in the data for the preliminary themes that were distracted. This top-down check was conducted one of the researchers of our research team; all transcripts were checked for arguments *not* to include a particular theme in our final set of themes.

### 3.4 Results

This section is divided into two parts. First, the current procedures of organizing TAWs' CD are described from the perspectives of the TAW, their direct managers at the client organization, and the HRM-advisors of the employment agency. Second, we described the impeding and fostering factors of these current procedures.

## 3.4.1 The current procedures of organizing TAWs' CD

*Perspective of the TAWs* 

All TAWs except for Anna explained that they primarily ask for CD opportunities at their client organization and had never requested CD opportunities at the employment agency. Five respondents discussed their CD-related questions with their direct managers. In these five cases, their direct managers accepted a request when they agreed that the CD-activity was possible financially, time-wise and content-wise. Alternatively, Will, made his wish explicit during a team meeting at the client organization. For him, this was a logical first step, as his client organization only wants to respond to *collective* questions with regard to CD, rather than individual questions. He illustrated this by means of an individual question he had about visiting each other's lessons:

Will: "During a team meeting I mentioned that I believe that we, as instructors, should visit each other's lessons more often to be able to improve our own. However, the strategy of the [client organization] is 'if you visit another instructor's lesson, you're not teaching at that moment, you're just listening, and that costs money'. So, they did not want to invest in my individual questions."

Suzie explained that the reason that she asked for opportunities for development at her client organization is that she believed that all her development questions directly related to her work. In her opinion, only her client organization could offer her the tailor-made training courses that she needed for working at this particular kind of organization:

Interviewer: "and have you ever considered asking about opportunities for development at [the employment agency]?"

Suzie: "No, I don't really see why I should ask them. My questions are mostly related to my work at [the client organization]".

Like Suzie, Martha and Will also explained that they asked their client organization for CD opportunities, as they believed that this was the place where they could develop their competencies. Josie and Pete argued differently. They explained that they did not ask for assistance from the employment agency as their client organization offered them enough CD opportunities:

Pete: "So far, I 've been really well supported by [the client organization]. (...) If I have a question, I can immediately discuss it. So, I don't need to contact [the employment agency]."

Anna was the only employee who requested CD opportunities at the employment agency:

Anna: "The first step is to check [the employment agency]'s web page to see what they offer and see how I can make it happen.

Interviewer: "So, you started looking for opportunities at [the employment agency.]"

Anna: "Yes, of course. They're my employer, formally. They earn money by employing me, so, hopefully, I'm important enough for them to offer me opportunities to develop my competencies. If they don't want to invest in me, or if they offer me e-learning courses which I believe are not right for me (...), I immediately contact my manager at [the client organization]".

In contrast to the other six TAWs in this study who gave arguments for both physical presence and content of work as making the client organization primarily responsible for their CD, Anna pointed to the formal business contract between her client organization and her employment agency. However, the last time she requested help for course facilitation, this procedure failed. She asked for the opportunity to participate in a course in which she could renew her heavy-vehicle driving license that would have been useful for her current job as assistant at the community recycling centre, and for her future career. For unknown reasons, the communication with the employment agency went wrong and they did not comply with her request. Eventually, Anna's client organization facilitated her participation in the course, and this experience gave her the feeling of "not feeling understood" by her employment agency:

Anna: "I asked [the employment agency] to help me with getting my truck driver's licence renewed. Unfortunately they said no. Getting permission for this driver's licence course took so long that, in the end, the course had already started (...); I was too late (...)

Interviewer: And what was your biggest frustration with this?

Anna: "I got the feeling that they didn't think with me. It felt more like 'It's great that you're working here – I don't even know who you are – but it's great that you work so hard. We've even had a number of compliments, that's fine.'(...) And that doesn't make me feel great."

Perspective of the client organizations' direct managers

It appeared that the direct managers of the different client organizations dealt differently with TAWs' CD. Suzie, Josie and Mary explained that they had all the freedom and support required from their direct managers to develop their competencies. However, other client organizations had different policies. Martha's direct manager explained that she was rather hesitant about offering Martha opportunities for CD until the moment it was clear that her contract would be extended. Pete and Anna's direct managers were primarily focused on offering them opportunities to be certified for their job. For Anna, this was just the CD that she needed, but for Pete this strategy blocked him from CD instead. Pete worked as a swimming instructor at a local swimming pool. He is highly educated and is interested in topics that go beyond his daily tasks of swimming instruction. Specifically, Pete felt the need to learn more about advanced didactics in

order to be able to differentiate in his teaching style between individuals in his swimming classes. However, the swimming pool focused their opportunities for CD on the certificates needed for teaching swimming lessons, so Pete's request to learn more advanced didactics was not granted because of the swimming pool's policies. Moreover, the strategy of Will's client organization was that only collective CD-requests of TAWs were accepted, and Will's direct manager was given the responsibility to manage CD-activities. As such, he organized CD-activities for the whole team that completely consisted of TAWs, rather than granting individual CD-requests:

Will's direct manager: "We have of course to check our own organization's needs. Would we benefit from such a specific question? If all team members asked questions like 'we want to develop our methodological and didactic skills, could you arrange a training day for us?', maybe my manager would be willing to organize this for us. But for someone who's only been working for us for six months (...), in cases like that my manager views this quite differently."

(...) "It's my task to be the 'sponge' of the [client organization]. Where possible, when I see people at work, I note things that, I believe, could be improved, and I come back to these issues when I give an example lesson."

This team-focused CD-policy resulted in Will's individual CD-question being blocked. Like Pete, Will was interested in improving his didactic skills. However, his client organization did not offer him the opportunity to work on this competence as he was the only one in his team interested in this topic.

In addition to the general CD policies, **client organizations differed in what they** *expected* **of the TAW with regard to their CD** *initiative*. For example, Will's direct manager did not expect him to take any initiative with regard to his CD. Rather, he asked Will to follow the path that he, as direct manager, had chosen for him and his team members. In contrast, Mary's direct manager explained that he expected his employees to come up with their own learning goals and suggestions for development:

Mary's direct manager: "I believe that that is the way it works. People have to be intrinsically motivated to do their work and to learn new things. Instead, I don't believe that it pays off if you tell employees what they have to learn."

As such, these different perspectives of the direct manager – more or less powered by the visions on CD and on the deployment of TAWs of the directors above these direct managers– appear to influence the opportunities given to a TAW for development a TAW.

Perspective of the employment agency's HRM advisors

With regard to the role of the employment agency, it appeared that the formal business contracts the employment agency has with client organizations differed from the one client organization to the other. In each contract, different clauses were made about primary and secondary working conditions, including opportunities for CD and these influenced and sometimes even determined the role of the employment agency in TAWs' CD:

HRM advisor Will: "We have to meet the client organization's wishes as written in the contract. Each client organization has its own goals and missions and related budgets, as employment agency, cannot just offer opportunities for competence development to our TAWs. All has to be discussed with the client organization first."

The leading formal business contract together with each client organization's own approach of TAWs' CD, made it **difficult for the HRM-advisors to respond to these policies in a tailor-made fashion.** That is, tailor-made to the client organization's policies, and tailor-made to the TAWs' personal wishes.

HRM advisor Josie: "Our role in TAW's CD depends on many things. For example, if an employee asks to join a course which requires funding, then we together check, who has budget for this, who has time, how much budget should be assigned. Will you invest time yourself, will [the TAW], or the client organization, or do we have to contribute as well? But we see that, to a great extent, this depends on the client organization. Some clients say: 'CD? Not in my time and not from my budget.' Then we have to decide how much we will and can invest in this particular case."

Apart from the formal business contracts with client organizations, the employment agency has its own CD policies. The employment agency offered different kinds of CD-activities, including free e-learning programmes, workshops, courses and training courses on different themes like 'creative thinking', and extensive courses and educational programmes based on TAWs' personal and professional wishes. With regard to the latter category, TAWs are invited to send in an individual request that is assessed by the HRM-advisors and is then either or not accepted. All CD opportunities are communicated to the TAWs via the employment agency's website and regularly presented in the employment agency's online newsletters.

The results show that TAWs, in the complex interplay between the client organization and the employment agency, approach one of the two organizations for their CD opportunities – and that in most cases, the TAW asks the client organization for CD opportunities. In the following subsection we elaborate on the specific difficulties in the current procedures of TAWs' CD recognized in each of the seven cases.

### 3.4.2 Impeding and fostering factors in current procedures of organizing TAWs' CD Impeding factors

Three main impeding factors for TAWs' CD could be recognized. First, it appeared that, except for Anna, all TAWs were unaware of their CD opportunities at their employment agency. Despite the fact that the participating TAWs mentioned other arguments for not discussing their CD with the employment agency and not asking them for opportunities for CD, their ignorance of these opportunities was apparent in six cases. As such, this ignorance was seen as a main factor preventing them from asking for CD-opportunities at the employment agency:

Mary: "I didn't know anything about the opportunities that [the employment agency] offered for development. So, this interview created new opportunities for me!"

Martha: "I see [the employment agency] as the organization that manages my contract. If I have any questions about my contract, I just contact them. (...) But, to be honest, I simply have no idea about the opportunities [the employment agency] offers."

In all interviews it appeared that the employment agency passively communicated the opportunities they had available for TAWs; via their website and via online newsletters. However, six of the seven *TAWs* explained that they did not read the information about OfCD via the website and newsletters. The HRM-advisors explained that passive communication was partly strategy as the employment agency did not have the resources to offer all of their TAWs equal opportunities. And, partly, passive communication was also due to the fact that the employment agency was still struggling with the question how they should and could optimally arrange and facilitate CD; in a way that it both facilitates the TAWs and that is manageable for the employment agency.

Second, all cases showed that there was **only little and/or indirect contact between the direct managers of the client organizations and the HRM-advisors of the employment agency.**Often, the contact between the client organization and the employment agency ran via the HR department of the client organization. As a consequence, the direct managers were not aware of the opportunities the employment agency had available for TAWs' CD, as explained by the direct managers of Suzie, Josie, Will, Pete, and Mary. Hence, they did not discuss OfCD TAWs with the employment agency, neither did they discuss a possible division of tasks, facilities and resources between the organizations:

Will's direct manager: "We don't know anything about it and it would be very nice if we were also told about the opportunities. I know the people in my team very well and if I'm told about a particular course that is offered via [the employment agency] and I think 'this is interesting for 'person x', I can alert him or her to this opportunity."

This lack of knowledge by the direct managers about the employment agency's CD policies can be explained by the fact that the employment agency's information provision was focused on informing the TAWs rather than informing the client organizations' direct managers about these opportunities, as pointed out by Pete's HRM advisor:

HRM-advisor Pete: "Currently, the information provision of opportunities for competence development that we offer is heavily employee-oriented; it may be a good idea to involve client organizations more."

However, according to Mary's direct manager, this communication should be a *two-way* process. He stressed that it is also the responsibility of a client organization to actively seek for this information:

Mary's direct manager: "I think a client organization as an employer has the responsibility to be aware of the opportunities for CD an employment agency offers to TAWs. Because if we're aware of these, we can also think about what they mean for us."

Third, it appeared that **the employment agency struggled with its position in the triangle, being the employer 'at distance'**. Their distant position made the contact with their TAWs quite scarce, with the consequence that they knew little about the specific wishes and questions of their TAWs for CD:

HRM-advisor Pete: "We don't contact you daily. That's because we [the employment agency] basically think you're doing your job over here, at [the client organization]. An that's why this situation arises, we don't actually know what you want."

Simultaneously, the HRM-advisors felt that they could not serve the individual wishes of all their thousands of employees, as they were not in the opportunity to stay in touch with all of them individually:

HRM-advisor Will: "It's distance that makes it difficult for us, as an employment agency, to offer TAWs opportunities for CD. We're not completely aware of what all our TAW's do at work. Furthermore, we're still struggling with the issue of how we can optimally serve all of the thousands of TAWs we employ, in a way that fits in with their wishes and to the setting in which they're employed".

### Fostering factors

Based on the impeding factors described above, one main fostering factor of the organization of TAWs CD was found. That is, a fostering factor TAWs' CD could be if there **was regular contact between the two organizations**, as suggested by several participants (e.g. Anna, Josie's and Suzie's direct managers; Suzie's HRM-advisor). According to our cases, it would be profitable if more contact was arranged between specific people who manage CD in both organizations. Regular

contact between the HR-departments or HR-officers of both employment organizations would contribute to a better CD organization at a macro-level, including a *quick* decision process between the two organizations as well as a financial division of responsibilities, together fostering TAWs' participation in CD-activities.

In addition to arranging more contact between the two organizations at an HR and policy level, more direct contact between TAWs, their direct managers at the client organization, and the employment agency HRM-advisor would be preferable. Where more contact between the HRM-departments will add to the information provision of the opportunities that both organizations have available *in general*, meetings with all three parties together may help to maximise the profit from the triangular employment relationship, as in these meetings the wishes and the OfCD *of a particular TAW* can be discussed. Josie's manager described the positive pay-off of having direct contact as follows:

Josie's direct manager: "I think, just between you and me, that we [the employment agency and the client organization] can and need to get closer to each other on the issue development policies. (...) We never have really communicated like this, because our HR-department usually always arrange the contact with [the employment agency] also when it comes to TAWs' CD, despite the fact that they don't know what really happens on the work floor. In my opinion, it would be more efficient if I had direct contact with [the employment agency] to negotiate about Josie's education and development.

(...) In practice, as I am Josie's direct manager, I am the first one who hears about her wishes for development."

The HRM advisors suggested creating opportunities for these triangular conversations by organizing regular evaluation meetings:

HRM-advisor Suzie: "Our [the employment agency's] idea is to organize regular appraisals in the future. (...) These [should really contribute to] that our employees really want to and really feel the need for personal contact; that's what we, once more, get from your story. That will help us to gain a much better idea of what we can offer to a client organization."

As such, evaluation meetings with all parties present would make it possible to customize answers to TAWs' CD-questions.

Two additional fostering factors of TAWs' CD that will help to *maximise* profit from the triangular relationship were extracted from the cases. Especially Josie and Mary showed that a **fostering strategy for TAWs' CD would be to not take the boundaries of TAWs functions too strictly into account**. In other words, it would foster TAWs' CD if they were able to engage in job crafting. TAWs enter a client organization for a limited period of time and are often hired for a particular task. It is tempting for client organizations to hire the TAW for this task only and to offer

them CD only when this is directly needed for their task. However, the cases of Mary and Josie show that the opposite can be true: if TAWs are given the opportunity to develop their competencies and to explore their talents beyond their direct tasks, this can result in even more profit for both the client organization and themselves and, as such, also for the employment agency. Josie, who has worked for one year as a communication advisor at a project bureau for spatial planning, explained this freedom as follows:

Josie: "Most of my professional development is a result of the freedom I get from the project bureau to define my own function. If they told me 'Hey, we hired you to organize this festival and until that's done, stay in your office' then that would be the end. Now, I've also been given the opportunity to be involved in marketing projects."

The same is true for Mary. She was able to follow her own path in defining her function that enabled her to develop competencies beyond the borders of her daily work. Mary and her direct manager explained that they believed that investing in competencies that go beyond the daily tasks is especially fruitful for both the TAW and the client organization:

Mary: "If someone's employed for six months, and can fulfil this task after having completed a particular course, then, this is an investment for both parties, in this case with a long-term vision. Eventually, this investment profits both sides: the organization gets the job done, and the employee develops competencies related to that particular task, as well as for future work".

Mary's direct manager: "We see this freedom as an investment in the future, where we never have an ultimate guarantee, but well, you've got to have faith, and, we've seen the magic happen."

Lastly, based on Josie's, Will's and Pete's cases, it can be stated that paying more specific attention to informal aspects of CD is preferable for TAWs' CD. These are aspects where the employment agency specifically can play a more prominent role. Related to their development questions of becoming better equipped in didactic skills, Will and Pete explained that it would be interesting to visit colleagues working in education and observe their colleagues' work. As it was not possible organize these opportunities within the client organizations, during both interviews they concluded that it would also be interesting to observe colleague-instructors in other sectors. For example, for Will, it would be interesting to visit a teacher working at a primary school and for him to observe how other instructors (i.e. primary school teachers) organize their lessons and instructions, and how the children behave in other kinds of teaching situations.

However, organizing informal CD-opportunities as described above and having them facilitated by the employment agency requires permission from the client organizations in question, as illustrated by Will's HRM-advisor:

HRM-advisor Will: "It's difficult to organize as these activities have to match the ideas of the client organization where the TAW is employed. (...) If you, like us, have to deal with so many different client organizations, who work with so many different employees, then I really see 'informal learning' as a challenge for us as an [employment agency]."

In Pete's case, a suggestion was that he would invest his own time and money to arrange informal learning opportunities. Both Pete and his direct manager were positive about this construction:

Interviewer: "Pete, if you were given the opportunity to visit a colleague working in a different supervisory role that you'd be interested in – arranged via [the employment agency] – would you be willing to invest your own time in this activity?"

Pete: "Yes, sure."

Pete's HRM-advisor: "And what do you [Pete's direct manager] think of that? For example, imagine you're a client organization, and then we ask another client organization, 'would it be OK if an employee visits your organization for learning purposes?' (...) We're of course dependent on different client organizations to make these ideas happen."

Pete's direct manager: "That would be fine by me.

Pete: In the past, we've done that with colleagues from [another organization]. I've asked here whether I could invite some colleagues for a day to our swimming pool to see how we work here. They came for half a day and we both learned a lot. So our organization is willing to arrange activities like this so that we can learn from each other."

Table 3.2 summarizes all impeding and fostering factors of TAWs' CD as found in this study. In Figure 3.1, all of these factors are represented in the triangular employment relationship.

Table 3.2
Summary of Impeding and Fostering Factors of TAWs' CD as Found in This Study

#### Impeding factors of TAWs' CD Fostering factors of TAWs' CD TAWs are often unaware of the available Contact between the client organization and opportunities for CD at the employment the employment agency on HR-level on a agency regular basis, to inform each other about recent policies and available opportunities for CD in general, and to make appointments for TAWs' CD. Little and/or indirect contact between the Moments of contact with all parties together, B. direct managers of a client organization in order to discuss a particular TAW's and the HRM advisors of the employment wishes and development opportunities. agency (being the persons that have to take care of TAW's CD). The employment agency struggled with its С. Having the opportunity as TAW to engage in position in the triangle, being the job crafting, and not taking the boundaries employer 'at distance'. of a function too strictly into account. Particular attention for TAWs' engagement

in informal CD opportunities by all parties.

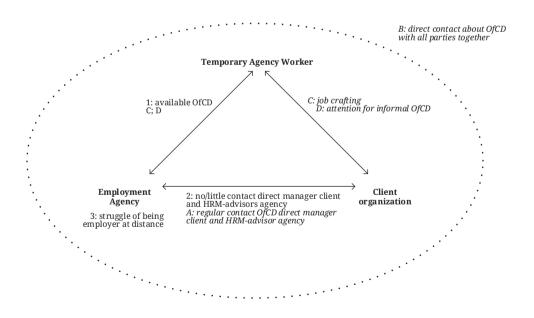


Figure 3.1. Representation of the impeding and fostering factors of TAW's competence development, as located in the triangular employment relationship.

*Note.* Numbers refer to the impeding factors; letters (in italics) refer to fostering factors, both presented in Table 3.2.

#### 3.5 Discussion

In this chapter, we explored why TAW constructions do not work as an actual triangle as hypothesized in the literature, and investigated what is needed to better utilize this triangular employment relationship. The mechanisms of the triangular relationship were explored in terms of psychological contract (PC) theory and social dilemma (SD) theory, and we particularly focused on the TAWs opportunities for competence development (OfCD).

Based on seven cases incorporating TAWs, their direct managers at their client organizations, and the employment agency HRM-officers, three impeding factors and four fostering factors for TAWs' CD were recognized (see Table 3.2 and Figure 3.1). It becomes clear that all *impeding* factors relate to the role of the employment agency in the triangle; either in relation to the TAW or the client organization. In line with the results of Chapter 2 and in line with other studies on the psychological contracts of TAWs (e.g. et al., 2011), this result echoes the underdeveloped role of the employment agency: in addition to the fact that the employment agency itself struggles with its position in the triangle (i.e. impeding factor 3), the direct managers at the client organizations and the TAWs also struggle with the question of what to expect from them in terms of CD.

All fostering factors represented in Table 3.2 and Figure 3.1, instead, relate to the complete triangular relationship (factor B), or to improve the different relationships (A) in which it is crucial to apply tailor-made policies (factors C and D) in order to optimally function as a triangle. With regard to fostering factor C, we show the potential of giving TAWs the opportunity to engage in job crafting. Job crafting refers to the actions employees undertake to alter the boundaries of their job in order to become more engaged, satisfied, resilient and to thrive at work (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2008; Demerouti, Bakker, & Gevers, 2015). Job crafting is known to contribute to employees' work engagement (cf. Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland, 2012) as it creates the opportunity to adjust a function to the specific job challenges and to create maximal personal meaning (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). In this way, according to SD Theory, giving TAWs the room for engaging in job crafting creates a long-term focus for all parties involved as it creates the opportunity for TAWs to show their capacities beyond the task for which they were primarily hired. Still, this long-term goal requires support from both organizations in terms of time and available resources, and the TAW involved needs to be open to new opportunities, as is the case of any employee engaging in job crafting. This, in turn, requires the organization to move away from the short-term goal of having a particular task fulfilled by a temporary employee, as this attitude reduces any potential benefits of engaging in job crafting.

Moreover, in line with Preenen et al. (2015), we show that it is also important that TAWs make use of *informal* learning opportunities (i.e. fostering factor D). Various studies have endorsed the importance of combining formal and informal learning in the workplace in general (e.g. Froehlich et al., 2014). However, according to Preenen et al. (2015), for TAWs the need to make use

of informal learning is even greater as formal learning opportunities are often unavailable to them (e.g. due to the associated required time and costs); these could then be compensated by informal learning opportunities. In this study, we confirm that TAW constructions also particularly lend themselves to organizing informal learning. That is, TAWs can build on the network of their employment agency in addition to their own network within the client organization. Employment agencies thus can facilitate TAWs' informal learning by inviting TAWs to meet colleague-TAWs with comparable functions at different client organizations and to learn from each other. In this way, employment agencies can add to the work-specific CD-activities that are often already available to TAWs at their client organizations. As such, facilitating more informal CD-activities will possibly contribute to a closer alignment of the employment agency with the TAW and with the (direct managers of) the client organizations, in turn contributing to a stable triangular relationship.

#### 3.5.1 The value of a relationship between the two organizations

We argue that especially the relationship between the two employment organizations needs to be improved in order to better utilize the triangular relationship. In terms of CD, all triangular employment relationships under study were simplified to a 'regular' employment relationship; the one between an employee and *one* employer that more or less facilitates CD. As such, all responsibility for TAWs' CD was left to the client organization, which is unfair for all the parties involved. For TAWs in particular, this situation is disadvantageous as their 'temporary stay' at a client organization often withholds client organizations from facilitating CD. As such, in line with our expectations, we conclude that there is a missing PC between the client organization and the employment agency. In addition to these expectations, this study shows that a PC between the organizations is *crucial* for closing the triangle in order to actually function as a triangular employment relationship, as claimed by SD theory. In order to achieve a maximal result for all parties involved (i.e. following SD theory), this PC should have a *balanced* character as CD is a topic that matches both short-term *and* long-term goals, and includes both financial, social *and* symbolic exchanges.

Obviously, the extent to which a PC between the two organizations is needed and also *can* exist is open to discussion, as the appointments made are recorded in the formal business contract and as they do not collaborate on the work floor together. However, it is *because* the fact that their relationship is built on this formal business contract, that we advocate a PC between the two organizations. In the formal business contract, not all mutual aspects can be defined, with the consequence that the topic of TAWs' CD remains undiscussed, although it is inevitable that both organizations and the TAWs themselves have expectations of each other's role in facilitating CD, *and* although it is primarily CD that has the potential to create benefits for all parties in the triangle. Having regular contact between the organizations at HR-level (i.e. fostering factor A, see Table 3.2)

and creating moments of contact with all three parties together to discuss individual TAW CD (i.e. fostering factor B) may lead to better understanding of the mutual opportunities for CD. This will contribute to the PC between the organizations, as it creates the opportunity to logically analyse common goals and shared interests of both organizations. Furthermore, it creates the opportunity to involve the employment agency more in TAWs' CD.

Davidov (2004) stressed the importance of a true collaboration between the employment organizations. He concluded that, for longer-term employment, in this collaboration both organizations have to equally act as employer; they share the same responsibilities rather than dividing these responsibilities between them. Almost fifteen years after Davidov made this statement, we can conclude that organizations still struggle with achieving this collaboration, or that they may not see its added value. This may be due to the fact that the recommendations to achieve a 'true collaboration', and to 'share responsibilities' are abstract. The theoretical contribution of our study is that it contributes to resolving this challenge by providing concrete clues for enabling this true collaboration, in terms of CD. Although Davidov's statements implicitly related to primary working conditions and legal appointments, we believe that his statements are particularly valid for topics that are difficult to capture in general policies, such as CD. An equally shared responsibility makes it possible to make appointments at the level of individual employees, and also helps to reduce the chance of one of the employers evading this responsibility (cf. Davidov, 2004). Thus, our study provides input for these appointments by focusing on OfCD. Davidov showed the need for more contact between organizations in order to maximize the potential of a triangular employment relationship and, in our study, we show that this is inevitably accompanied by the need for a balanced PC between the two organizations.

#### 3.5.2 Limitations

Firstly, the results of our study cannot be generalized to the whole TAW-population. For this study, the participating TAWs were purposively sampled, based on their high learning goal orientation as this indicated their affinity with learning. This affinity was advantageous as the participating TAWs were able and willing to discuss the current state of affairs regarding CD in TAW constructions based on their own experiences. However, this selection criterion may have influenced the results. Additionally, all seven cases studied were linked to the same employment agency. Although this aspect created a point of reference for the interpretations of all cases, the results cannot be generalized to TAW-cases linked to other employment agencies, with different CD-policies. As such, future research should focus on finding (dis)confirming evidence of our results in order to be able to draw generalizable conclusions.

*Secondly*, inherent to the set-up of group interviews, a drawback of organizing group interviews in which participants have mutual relationships is that participants may not speak freely

due to (perceptions of) different underlying interests. As the interviews were focused on the situation of the TAW (rather than a focus on the personal situations of the direct manager and the HRM-advisor present), we expected that the risk of this drawback was greatest for the TAW. As such, we attempted to minimize its effects by, when organizing the group interviews, asking the TAW about who they discuss their daily work with, about their professional development at the client organization, and whether they also felt comfortable about discussing these issues during the interview. Moreover, prior to the interviews, we checked whether any relational problems existed among the participants in each interview; this appeared not to be the case. However, the results may have been biased by social desirability.

#### 3.5.3 Practical implications

Although our conclusions are indicative, we can imagine that our suggestion to ideally handle CD per individual case could lead to some resistance at client organizations and employment agencies, as their business models cannot yet facilitate this individual approach. Still, we believe that different actions can be taken to get closer to this ideal and, as such, we defined the following practical implications.

Firstly, to organize OfCD for TAWs in a way that it has maximum benefits for all parties involved, the two organizations need to be more in contact with each other and they need to find ways to stay up-to-date about their TAW OfCD programmes. Moreover, they need to come to a mutual agreement about their roles in facilitating OfCD. As a first step to meeting this mutual agreement, we recommend employment agency and client organizations to together make appointments about TAWs' opportunities for CD. Two aspects should be included in these appointments: First, it should describe the information about opportunities for TAW CD at both organizations (contact persons, budgets, conditions and examples of opportunities) at the start of TAW employment. Second, it should describe the procedures for organizing CD during their employment, from the moment a TAW has an idea/question regarding CD to the moment of bringing this idea into practice.

Secondly, apart from coming to an agreement, these agreements need to be maintained, and in some cases, they need to be adjusted to the situation of individual TAWs. This process requires a continuous dialogue between the two organizations about OfCD (i.e. in line with fostering factor A, see Table 3.2). To achieve this, we recommend that HR-professionals in both organizations maintain this dialogue and explicitly function as the linking pin between the two organizations. Specifically, we recommend HR-professionals at client organizations to make sure that at least one of them is specialised in the TAW constructions that they work with, in order to provide tailor-made responses to TAW questions and to see the gaps between their own and the employment agency's CD policies. As HR-professionals from both organizations are up to date on the relevant courses and other CD-

opportunities like network events, coaching programmes, or feedback sessions offered by the employment agency, they are able to inform the direct managers working with the TAWs. This prevents client organizations from funding *all* OfCD for TAWs, and it possibly extends the kinds of opportunities for CD that a TAW can be involved in, as well as creating a closer relationship with the employment agency, creating benefits for the longer term.

Thirdly, we recommend that *employment agency* HRM-officers define a primary contact person for each client organization. Linking one particular HRM-officer to a client organization creates clarity about who they have to contact for questions about CD, and reduces the chance that client organization questions remain unanswered due to miscommunications or unclear appointments between employees in the employment agency (e.g. between HRM-professionals or between an HRM-professional and a front-office employee who has contact with a TAW).

Fourthly, for TAWs themselves, we believe it is of great importance that they are aware of their position in the triangular employment relationship, as well as about their employability. In this study, the participating TAWs primarily appeared to see CD in perspective of their current function at the current client organization, rather than that it could be also important for their future careers. This represents a short-term focus and prevents TAWs from looking for OfCD beyond their primary tasks, and focussing on their longer-term employability. By starting a discussion with their direct manager at the client organization and their employment agency – ideally in one and the same conversation – TAWs themselves can create a more individual approach to CD as suggested in this study. Discussing their CD and making a plan for further development together will contribute to their long(er)-term employability.

Together, these actions may contribute to closing the triangle by means of improving the communication on all sides, and by creating awareness of the importance and potential of CD for TAWs, both now and in the future.

Our findings indicate that investing in the relationship between the organizations will create a stage where CD can be explicitly addressed as a topic of mutual responsibility and a matter of exchange. This, in turn, creates opportunities for setting long-term goals regarding individual TAW CD, or CD policies in general, and to collaboratively address all parties' long-term goals. Thus, we can state that TAW constructions have the potential to greatly benefit all parties involved, rather than being a side-line issue that needs to be dealt with. Let us turn this potential into practice.

#### Appendix - case descriptions

#### TAW workplaces at the client organization

#### Suzie

Suzie works as Administrative Assistant for a large-sized organization for regional water management. She works in a department of 65 employees, of which three are employed via a TAW construction. Suzie is happy with her current workplace, the team she works in, and the good professional cooperation she has with her direct manager (Michael). She has participated in many courses in the past years, fed by her own interests, supported by Michael, and solely facilitated by the client organization. For Suzie, the main reason to take part in CD-activities is that she simply enjoys learning new things.

#### *Josie*

Josie works as Communication Advisor for one of the twelve Dutch Provinces. Specifically, she works at a project bureau for spatial planning for a particular rural area, and she considers this project bureau as her client organization and her workplace. Josie works in a multidisciplinary team consisting of ten to twelve employees, of which she and one other colleague are the only two employed via a TAW construction. In addition to her job at the project bureau, Josie works three days at another organization, where she does not work in a TAW construction. Josie primarily appreciates informal ways of learning and highly values the contact she has with her colleagues. She learns from all opportunities that pass by, whether they have a direct connection with her function or not, and explicitly believes that this attitude helps her to get the best out of herself, both professionally and personally. Josie feels that learning in this way is supported by her direct manager.

#### Will

Will works as Traffic Instructor (for children aged 4-12 years old) at a large-sized services organization, with services focused on insurance, traffic safety, traffic assistance and travel. Will works in a team of six traffic instructors, all employed via TAW constructions. Will is unsatisfied with the opportunities he gets to develop his competencies at this client organization, and explains that he sometimes clashes with his direct manager on this subject. His direct manager, in turn, explains that he has to follow his own manager's strategy; he is unwilling to spend time and money to facilitate TAWs' CD. For Will, the main reason for participating in CD-activities is to become a better professional in his current job.

#### Anna

Anna is employed as Assistant at a municipality waste treatment station. She works in a team with two direct colleagues and her direct manager. Anna is enthusiastic about her work and proactively seeks for continuous learning opportunities. Although she has still two years to go before her contract with this client organization ends, the main reason Anna looks for opportunities to learn new things, broaden her horizon, and to especially gain new certifications, is to improve her opportunities for finding a new job after her contracted period.

#### Pete

Pete works as Swimming Instructor for a swimming pool that is part of the local municipality. He works in a team with thirty colleagues, of which 21are employed via TAW constructions. Despite the fact that the majority of the team are employed via TAW constructions, they avoid using the term TAW, as for the team members and their direct manager this feels like a term of abuse. In addition to his work as swimming instructor, Pete works for three days at another organization where he has a permanent contract. Pete has two reasons for participating in CD-activities: (1) to keep his certifications up-to-date, and (2) because he wants to take his professional role as swimming instructor to a higher level. Pete feels that he can always negotiate about his wishes regarding CD with his direct manager.

#### Mary

Mary works as Project Secretary for one of the twelve provinces in the Netherlands (a different provincial organization than Josie). She works at a project bureau set up for a specific regional development. Mary does not work in a set team; she works together with colleagues from different teams, depending on the projects she is involved in. Mary has a permanent contract with the employment agency. With regard to CD, she stresses that she always looks for learning opportunities that are profitable for her *and* for her client organization. For her, this is a starting point for taking part in CD-activities. Mary has a good relationship with her direct manager and she feels supported by him when it comes to her CD.

#### Martha

Martha works as a teacher at a primary school. The school where she is currently employed is part of a foundation. Martha works as part of a team of five teachers and the school director. As Martha has now worked for four months at her current client organization, she is mainly involved in getting used to the habits and routines at this particular school. Still, she believes it is important to develop further, and she is willing to invest in this herself. Martha's motivation to take part in CD-activities is to become a better teacher and to broaden her teaching skills in particular.

Chapter 3 Competence development: the cure for temporary agency work constructions?



# 4

#### **Abstract**

Chapter 3 learned that TAWs often focus on formal learning activities, but that they also explicitly lack of these formal learning activities due to the temporary character of their employment. Therefore, chapter 4 explores TAWs' deliberate *informal* learning activities at the client organization. To meet the personal character of informal learning, it aimed at distinguishing *profiles* of TAWs regarding three deliberate informal learning activities (i.e. reflection, asking for feedback, and knowledge sharing) and related personal factors (i.e. self-efficacy, learning goal orientation, affective commitment and career perspective ). To do so, a Latent Class Analysis was conducted (n=449). Results showed five profiles, which were named as (1) the permanent TAW, (2) the employable TAW, (3) the compliant TAW, (4) the self-confident TAW, and (5) the resisting TAW. These profiles ranged from being very involved in deliberate informal learning, being learning oriented and actively building on a future career (i.e. the employable TAW), to being not learning oriented at all, not focusing on the future career and preferable not involving in informal learning activities (i.e. the resisting TAW). Based on the profiles found, this study urges client organizations to personalize their learning policies and to stimulate TAWs' *social* informal learning in particular.

#### 4.1 Introduction

Competence development (CD) is essential for TAWs as it contributes to their employability (cf. Dekker & Wilthagen, 2014; Veld, Semeijn, & van Vuuren, 2015) and to their perceptions of job security (e.g. Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015). Both their employability and perceptions of job security are of particular importance as they often have to switch between jobs and organizations (cf. Connelly, Wilkin, & Gallagher, 2011; de Witte & Näswall, 2003). However, TAWs are often not given many opportunities for CD (e.g. Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015) and particularly for *formal* learning opportunities (Preenen, Verbiest, van Vianen, & van Wijk, 2015). Moreover, organizing CD for TAWs is challenging, as it depends on the policies and opportunities of *two* employment parties, where there is often a lack of clear agreement on jointly facilitating CD (see Chapter 3). Building on these findings, in this chapter we explore TAWs' engagement in *informal* learning activities. We do so for two reasons.

First, engaging in informal learning opportunities may compensate the lack of formal learning opportunities that TAWs often have to deal with. Engaging in informal learning activities gives learners the control over their learning processes (Preenen et al., 2015). This is especially relevant for TAWs, as this implies that they are less dependent on the agreements made between the two employment organizations. However, the fact that informal learning implies a high level of control for the learner him/herself regarding the learning process, it does not mean that stimulation or facilitation by an employer is not needed (Billett, 2004). Moreover, given the triangular employment relationship, we believe that the facilitation of TAWs' informal learning requires a specific approach in which both employment organizations are responsible for their own role.

Second, at European level, the importance of *informal* learning has been recognized and it is currently seen as a major topic to be explored in order to strengthen the position of temporary workers (Ferreira Sequeda, de Grip, & van der Velden, 2015). Following Ferreira Sequeda and colleagues (2015), the European Commission states that employees who engage in informal learning and ensure lifelong learning create an appropriate balance between flexibility and security – for themselves and for the organization where they are employed. As such, informal learning is seen as a stepping stone towards more stable forms of employment (Ferreira Sequeda et al., 2015).

As how informal learning is established depends on individual preferences (Noe, Tews, & Marand, 2013), it is important to gain more insights into TAWs' informal learning activities as well as in the personal characteristics that can be related to their informal learning behaviour. We expect that their temporary stay at an organization influences their informal learning behaviour. In addition, as informal learning is largely managed by the learner, there may be many individual differences in informal learning activities due to learners' personal characteristics (Noe et al., 2013).

Gaining more insight into these aspects will help organizations facilitate and stimulate TAWs' informal learning behaviour. To meet the personal character of informal learning on the one

hand, and to end up with manageable and practical advice for organizations on the other, in this chapter we aimed to distinguish different typologies of TAWs regarding their informal learning behaviour and related personal factors. Knowledge about the differentiation among TAWs enables both TAWs themselves and their employers to improve support for informal learning and to gain maximum profit from the triangular relationship for all parties involved. In particular, this chapter focuses on TAWs' conscious, *deliberate*, informal learning activities (see section 4.2.1 for an explanation of deliberate informal learning), such as asking for feedback, as we believe that it is important to explore to what extent TAWs *consciously* work on their professional development in order to maintain or even improve their employability. Furthermore, this study focuses on TAWs' informal learning *in their client organizations*, as this is the place where TAWs fulfil their tasks and, as such, the place where they can learn on-the-job. Combining the two, the research question of this chapter has been formulated as:

Which TAW profiles can be distinguished regarding their deliberate informal learning activities and personal factors that relate to informal learning behaviour?

#### 4.2 Theoretical framework

#### 4.2.1 Informal workplace learning

In scientific studies about workplace learning often a distinction is made between formal and informal learning (cf. Tynjälä, 2008) as explained in Chapter 1 section 1.2.5. Particularly *informal learning* occurs on an as-needed basis, is learner-oriented, and involves action and reflection (cf. Noe et al., 2013). Besides, informal learning can occur individually as well as in social interaction with colleagues (e.g. Mulder, 2013). As described in Chapter 1, it is widely accepted that the combination of formal *and* informal learning opportunities is needed for competence development to occur (Froehlich, Beausaert, Segers, & Gerken, 2014; Svensson, Ellström, & Åberg, 2004; Tynjälä, 2008). However, in the literature, little is known about TAWs' *informal* learning practices (Preenen et al., 2015). Research about TAWs' workplace learning has mainly focused on formal learning and, specifically on the *impact* of training on TAWs' commitment towards the client organization (e.g. Chambel & Castenheira, 2012; Chambel, Sobral, Espada, & Curral, 2015; Felfe, Schmook, Schyns, & Six, 2008). Other studies focused on TAWs' CD without differentiating between formal and informal learning activities (e.g. Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015). As knowledge of TAWs' informal learning is scarce, the picture of their workplace learning behaviour is incomplete and that, in turn, makes it difficult for organizations to anticipate on it.

To fill this gap, the present chapter focuses on TAWs' informal learning activities.

Particularly, this chapter focuses on deliberative informal learning activities, as these are the kinds

of informal learning activities that a person (in this case a TAW), can actively control themselves. We take into account three crucial deliberate informal learning activities (cf. Runhaar, Sanders, & Yang, 2010): TAWs' individual reflection, feedback asking, and knowledge sharing. *Individual reflection* is defined as a person's individual critical thinking regarding his/her own identity in relation to the job performed (van Woerkom, 2003). *Feedback asking* is defined as asking colleagues or a direct manager about the impact of their professional behaviour with the aim of improving this behaviour (cf. Runhaar et al., 2010; van Woerkom, 2004). *Knowledge sharing* is defined as the exchange of task information and know-how in order to solve problems, develop new ideas, and/or implement policies and procedures (Cummings, 2004; Wang & Noe, 2010). Together, these cover both the *individual* (i.e. reflection) and *social aspects* (i.e. asking for feedback and knowledge sharing) of informal learning (cf. Gerken, Beausaert, & Segers, 2016; Mulder, 2013).

#### 4.2.2 Personal factors influencing informal learning behaviour

As is the case for research on TAWs' informal learning activities, little research has been conducted on *the influence of TAWs' personal factors* related to informal learning. We therefore build on insights gained from research conducted in the context of traditional employment relationships. Specifically, we take four personal factors into account when studying TAWs, as these have shown to be related to deliberate informal learning in general and are inspired on Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). We include variables that we expect to affect TAWs' engagement in informal learning, namely how TAWs perceive themselves (i.e. self-efficacy and learning goal orientation), how they value their careers (i.e. career perspective), and how they value their client organization (i.e. affective commitment).

More specifically, for engaging in reflection, feedback asking, and knowledge sharing, a certain level of openness is required with respect to the TAWs and their colleagues. As TAWs may feel that they are in a vulnerable position (cf. Preenen et al., 2015), they may be wary of engaging in informal learning as they run the risk of receiving negative feedback (cf. Runhaar et al., 2010). Moreover, due to the temporality of a TAW's stay in an organization, they may not (yet) feel optimally comfortable in that environment. As *self-efficacy* (SE) – referring to self-confidence in own ability to perform professional work (cf. Bandura, 1986; Noe et al., 2013) – is known to be an important factor to overcome a perceived risk (Mauer, Neergaard, & Linstad, 2009), we hypothesize that a high(er) level of SE will contribute to TAWs' engagement in informal learning. The more confident they feel in their own professional practices and feel that they can encounter difficulties in their work, the more they will reflect, share their knowledge, and ask for feedback from colleagues and their direct manager. Therefore, in line with research that shows a positive relation between SE and deliberate informal learning activities such as individual reflection and asking for feedback for employees in general (e.g. Lohman, 2005; Noe et al., 2013; Runhaar et al., 2010; van

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Woerkom, Nijhof, & Nieuwenhuis, 2002), we took SE into account when exploring TAWs' informal learning behaviour. We therefore do not focus on task-related SE, as is often done (Runhaar et al., 2010), rather we focus on TAW's *general* perceptions of their functioning.

Moreover, we expect that a higher level of *learning goal orientation* will contribute to TAWs' engagement in deliberate informal learning activities. In general, goal orientation is important for employees' job performance as it influences task interpretation and reactions to work outcomes (Dweck, 2000). In the literature, two types of goal orientation are distinguished: performance goal orientation and learning goal orientation. Performance goal orientation refers to a motivation to outperform others, to seek affirmation of behaviour, and to avoid negative feedback (Runhaar et al., 2010). Learning goal orientation (LGO) refers to one's intentions and eagerness to improve oneself by means of engaging in challenging activities (Choi & Jacobs, 2011). Employees with a high LGO are more likely to participate in learning activities and are more able to apply what they have learned in their work than employees with a low LGO (Brett & Vandewalle, 1999). We expect that the more TAWs see every temporary job or task as an opportunity to improve their competencies and to learn new and more complex tasks, the more they will be willing to reflect, share knowledge and ask for feedback (cf. Runhaar et al., 2010). All reflections, all feedback – whether positive or negative – and all knowledge they share with colleagues, will then be seen as resources with which they can improve their competencies.

Furthermore, we will account for the level of affective commitment. *Affective commitment* (AC) refers to "the emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in an organization" (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002, p.21). The extent to which employees feel committed to their organization influences the extent to which they are prepared to work hard for this organization and to which they strive to get the best out of themselves to contribute to the organization's success (cf. Chambel et al., 2015). Research indicates that TAWs often feel particularly committed to their client organization (e.g. Liden et al., 2003; Chapter 2), and that this has a positive effect on TAWs' participation in training courses (Chambel & Castenheira, 2012). We build on these results by taking into account the relationship between TAWs' AC towards the client organization and their involvement in *informal* learning activities.

Lastly, we expect that the importance people attach to their career influences the effort they put into their job as well as the effort put into developing their competencies (cf. Lin, 2015). *Career perspective* (CP) refers to "one's intention to match personal development with career development and to orient towards opportunities beyond the current tasks, job and employer" (van Woerkom, 2003, p.63). Employees vary in their willingness to either get involved in a complex career trajectory or to seek for stability (Brown, Bimrose, Barnes, & Hughes, 2012), and this logically influences their career perspectives. TAWs' working lives in particular, involve sequences of "career mini-cycles" as they have to deal with multiple transitions between their jobs and roles (cf. Sevickas et al., 2009). If

they want to remain employable, they have to frequently and explicitly think about and make decisions about new jobs and roles (Sevickas et al., 2009).

In the next section, we outline which analyses were conducted to link the personal factors to TAWs' deliberate informal learning activities, and to simultaneously differentiate between individuals.

#### 4.3 Method

#### 4.3.1 An integrated variable-centred and person-centred approach

In our study, we integrated a *person*-centred approach with a *variable*-centred research approach. Variable-centred analyses focus on predicting outcomes and to find associations among *variables* based on structural equations (Laursen & Hoff, 2006; Muthén & Muthén, 2000). Person-centred analyses instead, aim to group *individuals* in different categories to distinguish people with comparable characteristics from individuals with different characteristics (Laursen & Hoff, 2006; Muthén & Muthen, 2000). Person-centred analyses thus assume that there is heterogeneity among individuals resulting in different relationships between independent variables and dependent variables for each individual (Laursson & Hoff, 2006). Using a combined variable-centred and person-centred approach of research, we were able to investigate *the relationships between* the different informal learning activities *of TAWs* and their personal characteristics, while *explicitly accounting for* the individual character of informal learning. This analysis resulted in categories that each show a group of homogenous individuals based on a set of characteristics (Muthén & Muthen, 2000). The combination of approaches thus makes it possible to draw nuanced conclusions of TAWs' informal learning behaviour and to develop specific recommendations for facilitating and stimulating each TAW typology's learning process in a tailor-made fashion.

We used a Latent Class Analysis (LCA) to achieve this. LCA is an exploratory clustering technique in which relationships among observed variables are explained by means of an unobserved categorical latent variable (Collins & Lanza, 2010), based on cross-sectional data (Muthén & Muthen, 2000). In this way we were able to distinguish the different *profiles* of TAWs' deliberate informal learning activities, combined with their SE, LGO, AC and CP.

#### 4.3.2 Participants

The data used for this chapter originates from the same data set as used in Chapter 2. A description of the participants can be found in Chapter 2, section 2.2.1.

#### 4.3.3 Procedure

See Chapter 2, section 2.2.3 for an explanation of the data-gathering procedure.

#### 4.3.4 Instruments

Data were gathered by means of an online survey, distributed via Qualtrics, an online software programme, as described in section 2.2.3. All variables studied were based on validated existing scales. Whereas in chapter 2 the relationship between OfCD and AC was investigated, in this chapter the variables SE, LGO, AC and CP together with the informal learning activities were used to define the clusters of TAWs. All scales included Dutch statements to be scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "this statement applies to me: 'very much (1)', 'much' (2), 'moderately: (3), 'a little' (4), and 'very little' (5)". The scale for measuring *self-efficacy* had to be answered with the following five-point Likert scale answers: "(almost) always (1)", "regularly (2)", "sometimes (3)", "every now and then (4)", or "(almost) never (5)". Table 4.1 provides information about all scales used in this study with regard to the references, reliability (Cronbach's Alphas), and to example questions.

#### 4.3.5 Analyses

The items of all scales were recoded to align a high score of the scale with high scores on asking for feedback, reflection, knowledge sharing, SE, LGO, AC, and CP. In addition, prior to analysis, the assumptions for normality, linearity, homoscedasticity and multicollinearity were met; all scales showed sufficient reliability (see Table 4.1).

#### *Confirming the factor structures*

Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFAs) were conducted to check if all scales were unidimensional (see Table 4.2a). The goodness-of-fit of the estimated models was evaluated using different fit measures including Chi²-test, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). All fit measures showed *estimations* of good model fit; the model fit was considered satisfactory if at least three fit measures showed acceptable values (Kline, 2011).

As Table 4.2a shows, the scales for informal learning (i.e. asking for feedback, reflection and knowledge sharing) did not show a good fit, indicating multi-dimensionality within these constructs. Therefore, we conducted Exploratory Factor Analyses (EFAs) in SPSS 22.0 for these constructs to inspect if, how many, and which underlying factors could be identified. These EFAs had an exploratory character; i.e. no restrictions were set for the number of factors. Moreover, an oblique rotation was used as a relationship was expected among the factors within a construct. Tables 4.3 and 4.4 present the results of the EFAs for 'reflection' and 'knowledge sharing' respectively (for an explanation related to 'asking for feedback', see page 97). For both constructs, a three-factor structure appeared based on the Eigen values (>1), the scree plot results, and the Cumulative percentages of total variance explained.

All measured constructs

All measured constructs				
Construct	Scale reference	Number	Cronbach's Alphas /	Example questions
		of items	$Correlation^{\dag}$	
Asking for feedback	van Woerkom (2003)	10	06'	"I ask my direct manager for feedback."
Reflection <sup>†</sup>	van Woerkom (2003)	6	89.	
Reflection based on comparisons		4	.70	"I compare my own functioning with that of my colleagues at this client organization."
Reflection with a focus on		ςς	.78	"I pay attention to the aspects that I believe are
your sey Ambiguity in reflection		2	.37** ₩	unportain in performing in you. "I have no idea to what extent I perform my job well."
Knowledge sharing†	Runhaar (2008), based on van Woerkom (2003)	10	.84	
Sending knowledge to others		4	.78	"I am willing to share my knowledge with others."
Receiving knowledge from others		4	.80	"I regularly ask my colleagues for advice."
Quality of knowledge sharing		2	#**#	"I believe the amount of knowledge sharing within our team is high."

Table 4.1 (continued)

All measured constructs

Construct	Scale reference	Number	Cronbach's	Example questions
		of items	Alphas	
Self-efficacy	van Woerkom (2003), partly based on	9	.83	"Do you have the feeling that you can work
	Nenninger et al., 1996 and Nenninger et			effectively?"
	al., 1998.			
Learning goal orientation	VandeWalle (1997)	S	.91	"I like exciting and difficult tasks that allow me
				to learn new skills."
Affective commitment	Dutch version of the affective	2	.85	"I experience problems in my client
	commitment scale of the Three-			organization as my own problems."
	Component-Model (Allen & Meyer, 1990),			
	developed by Jak and Evers (2010).			
Career perspective	van Woerkom (2003)	2	.78	"I am continually occupied with my career
				development."

Note. 'See section 4.3.5 for an explanation of splitting the constructs 'reflection' and 'knowledge sharing' into different sub-constructs.

N=449.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Because this scale includes two items, reliability could not be computed, and correlations were presented instead.

**Table 4.2a**Fit Statistics of the confirmatory factor analyses of all constructs used in the subsequent Latent Class Analysis

Construct	Chi <sup>2</sup> -test			RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR
		df	<i>p</i> -value				
Affective commitment	74,22	5	<.001	.17	.93	.86	.05
Learning goal orientation	44,03	5	<.001	.13	.97	.95	.02
Work engagement	264,24	27	<.001	.14	.93	.90	.04
Career perspective	48,95	9	<.001	.10	.97	.94	.03
Self-efficacy	41,67	9	<.001	.09	.96	.94	.03
Informal learning							
Asking for feedback	350,78	35	<.001	.14	.86	.82	.06
Reflection	313,97	27	<.001	.15	.68	.58	.10
Knowledge sharing	899,98	35	<.001	.24	.58	.45	.10

Note. Chi2-test: a model shows a good fit if the *p*-value is non-significant. However, because a Chi²-test is sensitive to sample size, other goodness-of-fit estimates need to be taken into account. RMSEA: Ideally, RMSEA-values should be around .08 or less to be acceptable. CFI: Ideally, values of around .95 or higher are acceptable. TLI: Ideally, values of around .90 or higher are acceptable. SRMR: Values of .08 or less are acceptable (Kline, 2011).

N=449.

**Table 4.2b**Fit Statistics of the confirmatory factor analyses of 'Reflection' and 'Knowledge Sharing' allowing an underlying 3-factor structure for both constructs

Construct	Chi <sup>2</sup> -test			RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR
		df	<i>p</i> -value				
Reflection	66.73	24	<.001	.06	.95	.93	.05
Knowledge sharing	301.67	32	<.001	.13	.87	.81	.06
N=449.							

We also conducted a CFA for 'reflection' and 'knowledge sharing', in which an underlying three-factor structure was allowed for both constructs (see Table 4.2b). This resulted in an increased model-fit to either acceptable or good. Although one of the reflection sub-scales (i.e. "ambiguity in reflection") did not show good reliability (see Table 4.1), based on the results of the EFAs and CFAs together we decided to conduct further analyses to account for its underlying three-factor structure.

For 'asking for feedback', the EFA *did* show *one* underlying structure, with a cumulative % of total variance explained of 52.35%. We therefore decided to treat this construct as unidimensional, despite the moderate CFA fit results.

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**Table 4.3**Oblique rotated factor matrix of items measuring 'Reflection'

	Items		Factor	
		Reflecting	Ambiguity in	Reflecting
		based on	reflection	with a focus
		comparisons		on yourself
1.	I think about the way I perform my work	078	.021	992
2.	I think about the communication with colleagues	019	030	877
3.	I have difficulties in explaining what I have learned during the past year	.108	.836	.022
4.	I have no idea to what extent I perform my job well	117	.816	019
5.	I pay attention to the aspects that I believe are important in performing my job	.163	.018	673
6.	I compare my team with other teams in this client organization	.702	.003	.109
7.	I compare my current functioning to my functioning one year ago	.660	.074	146
8.	I think about what I have done wrong during the past year	.741	032	037
	I compare my own functioning with that of my colleagues at this client organization	.743	038	036

*Note.* The cumulative % of total variance explained with three factors was 62.66%. N = 449.

#### Exploring TAW profiles

Subsequently, we explored if, how many, and which classes (i.e. profiles) of TAWs could be discovered. We used Latent Class Analysis models to test various numbers of classes to select the best performing one. The selection process was based on three successive steps of evaluation: (1) checking the model fit statistics, (2) evaluating the posterior probabilities (entropy data), and (3) interpreting the visual images of the different plausible models.

First, the fit of the tested models were evaluated, based on different criteria (cf. Lugtig, 2014). Deviance statistics were inspected, indicating the absolute fit of the model (Singer & Willett, 2003) which was calculated as -2 times the Log Likelihood. Furthermore, the Bayesian Information Criterion values (BIC) were checked: the lower the BIC-values, the better the relative fit of the model to the data. The number of free parameters were also inspected, indicating model parsimony. Next, the *summarizing* value of Entropy (Celeux & Soromenho, 1996) was inspected, indicating the *overall* certainty of the classification quality. Entropy values ranged from zero (i.e. classification with complete uncertainty) to one (i.e. classification with complete certainty) and all values  $\geq$  .8 indicated good entropy (Celeux & Soromenho, 1996). Furthermore, the Lo-Mendell-Rubin Test (LMRT) and the Bootstrapped Likelihood Ratio Test (BLRT) were checked. Both the LMRT and the BLRT indicate if one model fits significantly worse compared to the model with one latent class *less* based on Log

Likelihood values, but the BLRT uses bootstrapping to estimate the size of the difference in Log Likelihood values (Nylund, Asparouhov, & Muthén, 2007). Values of  $p \le .05$  indicate that this is the case for both LMRT and BLRT. Because the absolute differences for the BIC between the different models can be small, these fit measures provided additional relevant information. Based on the combined statistical analysis, we decided which of the models should be explored further.

**Table 4.4**Oblique rotated factor matrix of items measuring 'Knowledge Sharing'

	Items		Factor	
		Sending	Receiving	Quality of
		knowledge	knowledge	knowledge
		to others	from others	sharing
1.	I am willing to share my knowledge with others	.883	038	123
2.	I regularly ask my colleagues for advice	.345	.638	142
3.	I regularly ask my direct manager for advice	073	.871	081
4.	I regularly share my knowledge and experiences with my colleagues	.744	.099	.102
5.	Due to my colleagues' advice, I can perform my work better	.269	.648	.005
6.	Due to my direct manager's advice, I can perform my work better	162	.826	.235
7.	Colleagues listen to me when I give them advice about work-related issues	.619	008	.167
8.	I appreciate the knowledge that is shared with me	.702	.027	.151
9.	I believe that the quality of knowledge sharing within our team is good	.114	011	.907
10	. I believe the amount of knowledge sharing within our team is high.	.056	.037	.902

*Note.* The cumulative % of total variance explained with three factors was 57.94%. N = 449.

Second, we explored the models that showed a good model fit further by means of their Average Latent Class Probabilities. This probability data shows more detailed information of the summarizing value of entropy, as it explains *separately*, for all classes, the probability that participants assigned to a certain class, may also be assigned to another class. For example, if in a *two*-class solution a value of 0.822 is assigned for class 1, participants have a probability of 0.178 to be assigned to class 2 (0.822 + 0.178 = 1). The value of 0.822 is >.8, so this participant is sure to belong to class 1. Based on this information, a further selection was made of models most convincingly represented the data.

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Third, the models showing the best data representation so far were inspected by means of interpreting each model's visual representations. We imported the model results gained in Mplus into SPSS. The means of all variables were calculated for each class in the model and visual representations were created of these means in MS Excel. Based on interpretations of each model's content (i.e. the course of each class and the total representation of the model) a final decision was made about which model fitted the data best.

#### 4.4 Results

Models with different numbers of classes were explored (see Table 4.5 for all fit statistics). To confirm that at least two classes could be identified, we first compared the model with one class to the model with two classes. Based on the entropy value and the LMRT fit statistic together, this two-class model showed no significant improvement to that of a one-class solution. We therefore further explored any differentiation by manually comparing the one class-solution to the model with a three-class solution. This comparison showed a significant improvement of the model fit of the three-class solution (p < .001), confirming that differentiating between TAWs' informal learning activities and personal factors is appropriate. We then further explored how many classes could be distinguished.

**Table 4.5**Fit statistics and model fit information of the LCA-Models

Number of classes	Deviance	BIC	Number of free parameters	Entropy	LMRT <i>p</i> -value	BLRT <i>p</i> -value
1	10937.64	11072.00	22	-	-	-
2	10642.62	10850.26	34	.70	.24	<.001
3*	10416.68	10697.60	46	.81	.13	<.001
4*	10263.52	10617.73	58	.81	.38	<.001
5*	10150.86	10578.36	70	.79	.33	<.001
<b>6*</b>	10033.42	10534.19	82	.86	.25	<.001

*Note*. \*For the models with 3, 4, 5 and 6 classes, the number of random sets of starting values was increased from default to 100 for the initial stage and 10 for the final stage optimizations.

The models with 3, 4 and 5 classes (boldfaced) showed the best results based on all fit statistics together. N=449.

Based on the statistical analysis, we concluded that models with three to six class-solutions showed the best fit. The model with the six class-solution failed to converge (as became clear from a

5208.34 + 5468.82 = 260.48

**Degrees of freedom** = Df of the 3-class model - Df of the 1-class solution

46 - 22 = 24

These numbers were imported in a Chi<sup>2</sup> significance calculator, resulting in a p < .001.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Chi<sup>2</sup> = Log likelihood of the 3-class solution - Log likelihood of the 1-class solution

warning in the output), indicating that a more parsimonious model would be preferred (Nylund et al., 2007). For this reason, the three, four and five-solution models were further explored.

Tables 4.6a-c show the Average Latent Class Probabilities of the three, four and five class-solutions, and indicate that the four and five class-solutions show more distinctive entropy values compared to the three-solution model. And, although both the four and five solution models fitted the data well, the model with *five classes* was chosen as our final model as this model showed greater diversity in TAWs' informal learning behaviour and related personal factors.

**Table 4.6a**Average latent class probabilities for most likely latent class membership (row) by latent class (column) for the three-class solution

Most Likely Latent Class	1	Latent classe	s
Membership	1	2	3
1	.864	.010	.125
2	.025	.880	.095
3	.060	.008	.932

*Note.* Values indicate entropy values, ranging from zero (random classification) to one (perfect classification). All rows add up to one.

The bold-faced values on the diagonal indicate the probability of the precision of the allocation of this class.

N=449.

**Table 4.6b**Average latent class probabilities for most likely latent class membership (row) by latent class (column) for the four-class solution

Most Likely Latent Class		Latent	classes	
Membership	1	2	3	4
1	.987	.000	.013	.000
2	.001	.939	.042	.018
3	.005	.013	.894	.088
4	.000	.010	.114	.876

Note. See note Table 4.6a.

**Table 4.6c**Average latent class probabilities for most likely latent class membership (row) by latent class (column) for the five-class solution

Most Likely Latent Class		Latent classes						
Membership	1	2	3	4	5			
1	.983	.015	.001	.000	.000			
2	.003	.828	.112	.057	.001			
3	.004	.070	.851	.075	.000			
4	.000	.035	.079	.885	.000			
5	.000	.017	.000	.001	.982			

Note. See note Table 4.6a.

## 4

#### 4.1.1 Exploring the final model

Figure 4.1 shows the distributions of the five classes over the variables explored, with the names we assigned to these profiles. In addition, Table 4.7 shows the distributions of participants over the five classes we distinguished as well as the names assigned to each class. The main characteristics of each profile is presented below.

**Table 4.7**Class information five-class solution

Cl	ass	Number of participants	Percentage participants
		in this class (n)	in this class (%)
1	The permanent TAW	166	37
2	The employable TAW	160	35
3	The compliant TAW	102	23
4	The self-confident TAW	12	3
5	The resisting TAW	9	2

Note. Class profile names were given by the authors.

#### The permanent TAW

37% of the participants were classified as 'permanent TAW'. TAWs with this profile are characterised by their high level of AC towards the client organization, indicating that they seem to feel "part of the family", which is why we refer to them as "permanent TAWs". Moreover, TAWs in this profile show high levels of SE, LGO, and CP, indicating that they are self-confident, willing to learn new things, and that they regularly think about (planning) their career. Inspecting their scores on informal learning shows that permanent TAWs score high on 'asking for feedback' – both in absolute terms and in relation to the other profiles. Furthermore, they score high on reflection on their own work (with a focus on oneself). However, they appear to be hesitant about sharing their knowledge with their colleagues. As such, their deliberate informal learning activities have an individual character.

#### The employable TAW

TAWs in this profile (35%) show high scores on all variables. They feel confident in their work (SE), show a high learning motivation (LGO), and consciously work on their future career (CP). With regard to these characteristics, employable TAWs look like the permanent TAWs. However, an analysis of their scores on informal learning shows that employable TAWs, compared to permanent TAWs, score higher on 'reflection' and 'knowledge sharing' (i.e. specifically, they seem to prefer to send their knowledge to colleagues rather than that they receive new knowledge from colleagues). Additionally, TAWs in this profile are characterized by a high level of affective commitment to their current client organization.

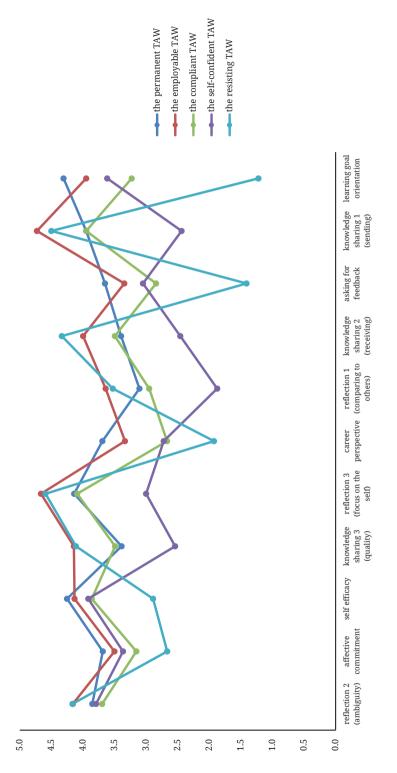


Figure 4.1. Visual representation of the five profiles of TAWs with regard to deliberate informal learning activities and related personal factors, ordered from variables with least differences between profiles on the left, to variables with most differences between profiles on the right.

#### The compliant TAW

We classified 23% of the participants as 'compliant TAWs'. TAWs with this profile score relatively low on CP, indicating they are moderately busy with planning their future career; developing their skills for their future career, and that they are moderately open for feedback. Compliant TAWs are open to sharing knowledge with colleagues and they reflect on their work with a focus on their own performance (i.e. less in comparison to others' performance). Given their absolute moderate scores on knowledge sharing (3.90 on the five-point scale for 'sending knowledge'; and 3.50 for both 'receiving new knowledge' and 'quality of the knowledge sharing') and asking for feedback (2.85), they moderately focus on their career perspective and their affective commitment towards their client organization is moderate. As TAWs with this profile do not primarily appear to be working on their own profiling with respect to guaranteeing their future position/work, it seems that they 'accept' their position. Therefore, we have typified them as compliant TAWs.

#### The self-confident TAW

Of the participants, 3% were classified as 'self-confident TAWs'. They score low on sharing knowledge with colleagues (both in absolute terms and when compared to other profiles) as well as on feedback by means of comparing themselves to others. Their SE is high but they score low on knowledge sharing and comparing themselves to others. Furthermore, similar to compliant TAWs, self-confident TAWs score moderately on CP and are not explicitly open for feedback. They also score moderately on AC towards their client organization and LGO. Together, these results imply that TAWs in this profile are self-confident but uncommitted. They seem to rely on their capacities without actively seeking opportunities to improve their professional behaviour.

#### The resisting TAW

Lastly, 2% of the participants were classified as 'resisting TAWs'. This group deviates from the other TAW categories in many ways. They are characterized by a low LGO score, indicating that they do not explicitly seek opportunities to learn new things in their daily work, or that they do not perceive the opportunities for this. Moreover, their level of AC is relatively low, as is their CP score. Together with their moderate and relatively low level of SE, it is likely that resisting TAWs feel uncomfortable in their position at their current client organization. They may not want to attach themselves to this client organization and they feel no need to explicitly pay attention to their future career (low score on CP). With regard to informal learning, these TAWs explicitly do not ask for feedback from their colleagues. However, despite their low scores on LGO and asking for feedback, TAWs in this profile do share their knowledge and reflect on their own work.

#### 4.5 Discussion

In this chapter, we set out to answer the following research question: Which TAW profiles can be distinguished regarding their deliberate informal learning activities and personal factors that relate to informal learning behaviour? We conducted a Latent Class Analysis in which three crucial deliberate informal learning activities were included: reflection, knowledge sharing and asking for feedback. We also included the learning-related personal factors of self-efficacy (SE), learning goal orientation (LGO), affective commitment (AC), and career perspective (CP). Based on results of the Latent Class Analysis, we were able to distinguish five different TAW profiles which we called: (1) the permanent TAW, (2) the employable TAW, (3) the compliant TAW, (4) the self-confident TAW, and (5) the resisting TAW. TAWs in these profiles ranged from being very involved in deliberate informal learning, being learning-oriented, and actively building a future career (the employable TAW), to not being learning-oriented, not focusing on their future career, and preferably not being involved in informal learning activities (the resisting TAW). The majority of participants (95%) were classified as permanent TAWs, employable TAWs or compliant TAWs. As each of these three profiles covers a quarter to a third of the total sample, this confirms the expected differentiation in perceptions and experiences on deliberate informal learning. These results show that an individual approach to informal learning activities is appropriate and deserves greater attention in the client organization HR-policies. In this section, we describe the main characteristics of three of the five profiles in more detail.

One third of the TAWs in the sample (35%) were classified as 'employable TAWs'. This group's characteristics are aligned with the 'ideal' TAWs described in the scientific literature (e.g. van Breugel, van Olffen, & Olie, 2005): they appear to be self-confident experts in their field, feel the need to develop their competencies, and engage in deliberate informal learning activities. Interestingly, the fact that employable TAWs make up one-third of the sample, indicates that a *majority* of the TAWs in our sample show *other* manifestations than this ideal picture. This, in turn, indicates that TAWs do not often maximally profit from a TAW construction in terms of professional learning, which possibly has consequences for their employability (cf. van der Heijden, Boon, van der Klink, & Meijs, 2009).

The profile of the largest group of participants, 'permanent TAWs', shows a more 'traditional view' towards temporary work, referring to *short-term* temporary *replacement* of permanent staff (cf. von Hippel et al., 1997) often perceived as an undesirable form of employment given the associated (financial) insecurities. It is notable that such a large group of TAWs still seems to have this perception, given the fact that in many organizations they are currently a structural part of the workforce. They are hired for the longer term and do jobs equal to those done by permanent staff (cf. Håkansson & Isidorsson, 2015; Mitlacher, 2008). Moreover, opting for a permanent contract is in many organizations and branches nowadays a wishful thinking.

Although the differences between the profiles of 'permanent TAWs' and 'employable TAWs' appear to be nuances on first reading, we believe that there are important differences between them. First of all, employable TAWs engage more in deliberate informal learning activities. Second, their level of AC towards the client organization is a little lower compared to the AC of permanent TAWs. This may indicate that they still feel affectively committed to the client organization, while at the same time being aware of the fact that they will leave this organization. Third, typically, employable TAWs appear to be less planned with regard to their career (i.e. career perspective) compared to permanent TAWs. We postulate that this follows on from their expertise. TAWs with an employable profile are of high value for client organizations; they bring their expertise with them and do not have the intention to stay. Due to their expertise as well as their view that the client organizations will only employ them for a limited time, new opportunities for work then arise for employable TAWs just when – or even before – a previous assignment has ended. A plan for their future career may be less necessary as they probably have enough opportunities to build on.

In comparison, permanent TAWs show a high level of AC towards their client organization, and a high learning attitude (LGO) but engage less in knowledge sharing and reflection. Possibly, they want to be part of the family *so* much, that they aim to show the best version of themselves as this will increase the chance that they can continue to work for their client organization. Showing a learning attitude and focusing on improving performances may be a means to achieving this goal, while asking others for input to improve their work may be felt as blocking this focus.

The smallest group of the TAWs in our sample (2%) is classified as 'resisting TAWs'. Their deviant scores on almost all variables require specific interpretation of this groups' underlying mechanisms. It is plausible that resisting TAWs resist learning and manifest negative feelings towards their client organization, their work, or their career, because they either feel themselves to be incompetent (i.e. as implied by their self-efficacy) or as a consequence of feeling ambiguous about the situation in which they are involved (i.e. a TAW construction rather than a permanent contract, for example). These factors then lead to them having a hesitant attitude to any opportunities offered. This interpretation explains their explicit low score on asking for feedback, as this is something they would rather avoid than embrace. In line with this interpretation, they possibly value sharing knowledge not as a 'learning' activity but rather as part of their daily work, explaining the high scores on the knowledge sharing scales. Although this group is small, our results indicate that, if this mechanism holds true, resisting TAWs can benefit from assistance in 'learning to learn' to overcome their resistance and to create their learning opportunities as a means to improving their own employability.

Looking at the differences between the five profiles, the largest differences can be observed on 'asking for feedback', 'knowledge sharing' (i.e. both sending and receiving knowledge), and 'learning goal orientation'. Interestingly, with regard to the learning activities 'asking for feedback'

and 'knowledge sharing', both activities cover *social* informal learning activities for which a certain level of interpersonal trust and cooperation is needed (Ipe, 2003; Levin & Cross, 2004). Moreover, it is known that knowledge sharing between individuals depends on the extent to which they have a shared language, a shared vision, and it depends on the strength of their interpersonal ties (Levin & Cross, 2004; Mooradian, Renzl, & Matzler, 2006). Plausibly, the extent to which TAWs engage in these social learning activities is subject to the extent to which they experience interpersonal trust at the workplace and feel the opportunity to cooperate. This may be especially the case for TAWs when compared to 'regular' employees, as TAWs enter a client organization on a temporary basis and may sometimes feel that they are at the periphery of a team because they are employed via an external party.

Moreover, inspecting each profile separately with regard to knowledge sharing and asking for feedback shows that all profiles, except for self-confident TAWs, appear to be *more* engaged in knowledge sharing than asking colleagues for feedback. An explanation for this pattern can be that asking for feedback may require *even more* trust and openness between colleagues than is the case for sharing knowledge. That is, knowledge sharing focuses on exchanging expertise with *a focus on the content of a job-task*, thereby disconnecting this task from the person in question. Feedback, instead, focuses on one's behaviours and as such, touches upon the person him/herself as well as on the relationship between the feedback-receiver and the feedback-giver. Reaching this level of trust takes time and/or needs some manifestation of a possible future-perspective; these are two aspects that do not necessarily align with the TAW-principle but may particularly influence them due to the temporality of their stay.

Lastly, the fact that most differences between the profiles are related to TAWs' learning goal orientation, shows that TAWs differ in the extent to which they see 'learning' as a primary goal in their work. This illustrates that much is to be gained for TAWs with regard to their focus on their employability. In line with Chapter 2, this illustrates that TAWs may perceive TAW-work more traditionally, in which there is little or no room for professional development. However, viewing work experience and all opportunities available to TAWs in a function as a means to learning new things and developing their skills, are important contributors to their employability (Lin, 2015). To flourish in a work-setting that has a *temporary* character and that has particular organizational challenges due to the involvement of *two* organizations, learning goal orientation is of crucial importance. We show that many TAWs do not see this added value or may struggle to find a way to merge their learning and development due to being employed by means of a TAW construction.

#### 4.5.1 Limitations and suggestions for future research

The first limitation relates to the selection of variables included in the profile study. We aimed to contribute to the knowledge about TAWs' informal learning in particular – a topic that has scarcely

been studied – rather than presenting a complete picture of TAWs' learning behaviour. We deliberately chose to measure a selection of informal learning activities as well as a selection of personal factors that are known to influence individual's learning processes, as this would allow us to explain the differentiated mechanisms and add to studies that portray TAWs as a homogenous group of employees. However, a drawback of presenting a selection is that we only partly cover TAWs' informal learning activities. If the TAWs in our study had no or a limited engagement with reflection, knowledge sharing and/or asking for feedback, this did not necessarily mean that they did not engage in informal learning at all. Possibly, these learners engaged in different kinds of learning activities based on their personal preferences (i.e. either deliberately or not; cf. Noe et al., 2013) and/or due to the opportunities that, to a greater or lesser extent, were offered by their working environment (cf. Billett, 2001). Therefore, our results serve as a point of reference and include a more differentiated range of deliberate learning activities. A profile analysis on TAWs' informal learning may be an interesting 'next step' for future research. In particular, exploring the influence of organizational context variables may add interesting results with regard to TAWs' informal learning activities. For example, aspects like support of professional development by the manager, or dominant beliefs about learning (of TAWs) in the organization may influence the extent to which TAWs engage in learning. Following Fischer and O'Connor (2014), perceptions of a strong learning culture influence the extent to which employees feel the need to continuously develop, and influence the extent to which employees work together in order to continuously improve their collective work. As such, insights in the learning culture via support of a manager, or via dominant beliefs about learning may give insights into the ways in which learning is stimulated, and what roles are given to team managers to stimulate competence development and informal learning in particular. Moreover, studying these context factors may give insights into the extent to which organizations as a whole, and team managers in particular, approach TAWs when it comes to informal learning in comparison to permanent employees, and/or compared to temporary employees employed without the interference of an employment agency. In other words, taking the learning culture of an organization into account may provide new and additional insights about TAWs' informal learning activities.

A second limitation relates to the perspective used to measure informal learning. Our analyses were focused on TAWs' self-perceptions regarding their deliberate informal learning activities. We chose this perspective as we aimed to define profiles based on informal learning and personal factors, of which the latter could only be measured by means of self-perceptions. The profiles were most informative, as all variables were measured from the same perspective. However, this has the consequence that our information about TAWs' actual informal learning activities is not yet complete. Therefore, future research may profit from in-depth research on TAWs' informal learning by including different research designs and data. Specifically, it would be

valuable to gather data by means of observations or by asking TAWs to keep a log in which they present their deliberate learning activities, as well as reflecting on their daily tasks and on the activities that they did in a certain period of time. This in-depth qualitative research will go beyond our findings on deliberate informal learning, by providing insights into both reactive and deliberate learning activities, as well as those activities not labelled as *learning* activities, but that *did* result in learning (i.e. implicit learning activities, Eraut, 2004).

# 4.5.2 Practical implications

We show that TAWs have diverse perceptions in their client organizations about 'learning', and that these aspects relate to the informal learning opportunities they see and actually engage in. This conclusion has different practical implications for both TAWs and client organizations. With regard to the role of client organizations, creating opportunities for informal learning obviously is step one in facilitating TAWs' informal learning. However, this in itself is not enough to actually engage them in these learning activities. Client organizations may pay explicit attention to creating a safe environment for TAWs to engage in the more social informal learning activities, such as asking for feedback and knowledge sharing. To create a safe environment, direct managers at client organizations have an important task in regularly discussing the available informal learning opportunities with TAWs, as well as emphasizing the added value of these learning opportunities. It is especially important to (attempt to) recognize TAWs with a low LGO, and to help them see the added value of informal learning, and take up available opportunities. TAWs enter a client organization as relative 'outsiders'; they are in the position to bring new expertise, and a safe environment contributes to knowledge creation by allowing creativity and learning (Cross, Parker, & Borgatti, 2002). Moreover, as learned from network-based research on entrepreneurship, the knowledge of employees in the periphery of a social network, such as a team of employees within a client organization, explicitly contributes to innovation (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003). As such, it is important to keep the knowledge of these peripheral employees (i.e. TAWs) up to date and to give them the opportunity to learn and develop during their work. In other words, the value of TAWs' informal learning for client organizations must not be underestimated.

For TAWs themselves, it is important that they remain open to informal learning opportunities and that they take up these opportunities when available. In order to be engaged in informal learning, it is not enough if an organization *affords* the opportunities for doing so; it depends on TAWs' *agency* to ensure the extent to which these opportunities are fruitful (Billett, 2001, see also Chapter 1 section 1.2.5). That is, TAWs may focus on the learning opportunities that are available to them and that contribute to their present job and/or for their future career, and they need to take the step to deliberately engage in these learning opportunities. A crucial aspect is that TAWs should see learning and development *as part of* their job, instead of seeing the

temporary character of their job as a reason *not* to engage in learning and development. Thus, TAWs themselves are responsible for frequently keeping track of their own learning and development, and for discussing this issue with their direct manager at the client organization.

This study provides insights into the variations among TAWs regarding their informal learning activities, how they value learning, and how they value their client organization. Informal learning is of particular importance for TAWs, and the different profiles we found subscribe to the importance of employers paying attention to these diverse informal learning behaviours. Furthermore, this study functions as a stepping-stone for future research that will both deepen and broaden our understanding of TAWs' competence development. Let us facilitate their learning the best we can.



#### 5.1 Introduction

TAW-contracts are currently longer than they were in the past, however TAWs still experience job insecurity and feel that they are treated differently compared to other 'types' of employees (e.g. permanent or direct hired employees). An important consequence is that it reduces their commitment towards the employment organizations, a crucial contributing factor to a healthy triangular relationship in TAW constructions. This is what led me to start this PhD-project: to dig deeper into the reasons underlying the mismatch between the ideal and real situation of TAW employment and to search for ways to overcome this mismatch. Existing research indicates a number of issues arising in and from TAW constructions, but little research has been conducted on the reasons underlying these issues. In this dissertation, I focused on unravelling these problems and I explored which aspects contribute to a fruitful TAW construction. In this respect, 'fruitful' refers to a situation in which all parties benefit from this employment construction, including the TAWs themselves. Moreover, it refers to a situation in which is focused on the long-term goals of these TAW relationships rather than short-term goals. I have taken a competence development approach rather than the commonly used psychological or (strategic) HRM approaches in TAW research. Specifically, I explored various aspects of TAWs' competence development (CD) based on the conviction that CD emphasizes the positive aspects of a TAW construction, with expected benefits for all parties involved. By choosing this starting point, I aimed at gaining new insights and contributing to the ideal picture of this employment construction in the longer term. Therefore, I formulated the main research question:

What is the potential of competence development for improving temporary agency work constructions?

In the remainder of this chapter, I present the conclusions of this dissertation that answer the research question (section 5.2). I then, discuss these conclusions (section 5.3), and provide suggestions for future research (section 5.4). This follows with practical implications (section 5.5) and I end the chapter with concluding remarks (section 5.6).

#### 5.2 Conclusions

The research findings have led to three main insights learnt from studying TAWs' CD.

First of all, we revealed that TAWs' perceptions of (their involvement in) a TAW construction appeared to be traditional, hindering them from paying explicit attention to CD. Specifically, these traditional perceptions refer to the idea that TAWs are hired for assignments for a short period of time, without any opportunity to 'become part of the family' of a client organization. It stresses the short-term temporary character of a TAW-contract, and shows that

TAWs perceive that the primary focus is on the client organization as being the organization that offers them the most work opportunities for the future. Moreover, we confirmed the potential of opportunities for competence development (OfCD) for a TAW construction. Offering TAWs OfCD contributed to their affective commitment towards both of their employment parties. As such, according to TAWs, OfCD is a beneficial instrument which helps them become more involved and engaged with the client organization *and*, to a lesser extent, with their employment agency. This, in turn, contributes to a more contemporary approach of a TAW construction.

A second conclusion is that personalization of OfCD, i.e. TAWs are offered tailor-made OfCD, helps TAWs to actually participate in CD-activities and to work on their ambitions. Moreover, personalization of OfCD is needed to deal with the enormous diversity among TAWs, a fact that appeared throughout the dissertation. Particularly, personalization of stimulating and/or facilitating opportunities for informal learning activities provide an extra key to success, as we demonstrated that TAWs in particular differ in the extent to which they engage in social deliberate informal learning activities, and therefore require personalised support from their employment organizations.

Third, we concluded that communication between the three parties in the triangular employment relationship (i.e. the TAW, and the persons responsible for facilitating CD at the client organization and at the employment agency) is crucial to facilitate TAWs' CD and as such, the triangular relationship. On the one hand, communication between the parties helps to complete the picture of the OfCD activities available to TAWs. On the other, it helps to clarify, assign, and to check the responsibilities of the persons and institutions involved. However, currently, CD is often not seen as topic to be *jointly* discussed with all parties in the triangle, despite the fact that all parties believe CD to be an important aspect of work in general. This lack of discussion illustrates the inadequate communication between the three parties, in turn, hindering TAWs' CD and eventually their AC.

Our research thus revealed three complexities of the triangular employment relationship of a TAW construction, viewed from a CD-approach. As these complexities simultaneously reflect three sources of potential, it can be argued that these aspects are *crucial* for letting a TAW construction function as an actual *triangle*. In the next section, each of these conclusions is further explained and discussed.

#### 5.3 Emerging insights

#### 5.3.1 The persistence of TAWs' traditional perceptions of a TAW construction

The extent to which OfCD is available influences the way TAWs feel welcome at, and are affectively committed to, their employers (i.e. their client organization and their employment agency). In this

dissertation, we show that TAWs' expectations of OfCD and the extent to which these expectations are fulfilled, relate to their affective commitment (AC). Cross-over effects were found, indicating that opportunities for OfCD offered by the employment agency contribute to the AC towards the employment agency, but also contribute to their AC towards the client organization and vice versa, albeit to a lesser extent. Furthermore, we show that 'surprising effects', i.e. when TAWs received more OfCD than expected, particularly contributed to their AC towards their client organization and the employment agency. However, this surprising effect is precisely what reflects TAWs' traditional perceptions of a TAW construction. These perceptions appear to prevent them from asking for OfCD - especially at the employment agency - and also reduce their commitment to the employment agency. As such, we learned from looking at CD that, despite the trends in the temporary agency sector to move towards more 'modern' ways of employment (see Chapter 2, section 2.4.1; Chapter 3, section 3.1), that TAWs have low perceptions of, and that they still dislike, working via a TAW construction. We also learned that CD can be a promising 'tool' to improve the triangular relationship and to make it an actual *triangle* rather than a disturbed bilateral relationship between a client organization and a TAW. This, however, requires a change of a TAW mind-set regarding their participation in a TAW construction, as well investments by both employment parties to strengthen the employment agency's position in the triangle when it comes to CD.

Emerging insight: facilitate CD by starting from TAWs' basic psychological needs Our findings suggest that TAWs' traditional perceptions prevent them from asking for OfCD. For this reason, it is of particular importance to gain insights into the ways these traditional perceptions of TAW constructions can be influenced and changed towards more contemporary perceptions – i.e. with a focus on TAWs' (long-term) employability, on their career, and on CD – so that these perceptions no longer form an obstacle for their learning and development and for their AC. In other words, if we want CD to contribute to TAW's AC and to help them flourish in their work, their expectations of OfCD as well as the image of a TAW construction need to be taken seriously. We argue that this necessitates a different research focus on TAWs' CD; it requires a theoretical approach that looks at TAWs' reasons for learning and how they interpret their CD within the context of their TAW construction, rather than focussing only on the kinds of learning activities (i.e. training courses) they can undertake within the (financial) boundaries of a temporary contract. Specifically, Self Determination Theory can provide this different approach as it concerns people's "growth tendencies and innate psychological needs that are the basis for self-motivation and personality integration, as well as for the conditions that foster those positive processes" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.68). Self Determination Theory describes three basic needs that are essential for optimal functioning: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy refers to "the need to experience one's behaviour as volitional and self-endorsed" (de Haan, Hirai, & Ryan,

2016, p.2039). Specifically, autonomy is provided when people feel that they have the opportunity to make their own choices and that they are also willing to do so. Competence, in this framework, refers to "the need to experience efficacy and mastery in important activities in one's life" (de Haan et al., 2016, p.2039). Competence is stimulated by environments that provide opportunities for developing and acquiring skills, and for receiving feedback that helps improve these skills. Lastly, relatedness refers to the basic need "to feel significant and connected to important others" (de Haan et al., 2016, p.2039). A person feels related when he/she cares for others in his/her environment and is also cared for by important others (de Haan et al., 2016).

Past research showed that Self Determination Theory is a useful framework for explaining psychological processes of individuals at the workplace, for example with regard to work value orientations (Vansteenkiste, Neyrinck, Niemiec, Soenens, de Witte, & van den Broeck, 2007) or motivation to work (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Additionally, it has proven to be a useful framework for explaining motivations for *learning*, given its focus on people's growth and development.

Specifically, autonomy is subscribed as a major antecedent of workplace learning (Kyndt, Gijbels, Grosemans, & Donche, 2016) and as a prerequisite for skill development in use (Holman & Wall, 2002). With regard to the field of TAWs, autonomy is not a new concept. For example, Hall (2006) pointed out that TAWs experience a lower level of autonomy compared to their permanent colleagues. Moreover, Kalleberg, Nesheim, & Olsen (2015) reported that autonomy is an important aspect of TAWs' perceived job satisfaction. These results stress the need to pay attention to TAWs' autonomy. Nevertheless, little is known about *TAWs*' autonomy *for learning* and Self Determination Theory may provide thus provide a new perspective in this respect.

Taking Self Determination Theory, and particularly the three basic psychological needs, as a starting point for studying TAW's expectations of OfCD and their AC towards both organizations, we learn that workplaces must facilitate these basic needs for *each individual* TAW. This then helps TAWs to continuously develop their competencies and, as such, to create a fruitful learning environment in which they flourish. Workplaces should therefore facilitate TAWs' CD by giving them *autonomy* over their own learning processes, and by stimulating them to perform tasks that they are good at and that might go beyond their function profile. In addition, special attention needs to be paid to ensure that TAWs, socially, are part of the team in which they are employed (i.e. relatedness) as this encourages their development, and thus has a pay-back on both AC and performance.

#### 5.3.2 Personalization of OfCD

There is no 'archetypal TAW'. That is, TAWs differ from each other in many different aspects, such as their job characteristics (e.g. their contracts and functions), levels of educational background, their experiences and needs of CD, and the extent to which they actually participate in CD-activities.

Moreover, other stakeholders (e.g. managers or HR-professionals) have many different perceptions that dominate TAW constructions: on the role of TAWs in organizations, on CD-policies for TAWs, on the 'meaning' of CD for organizations in general, and on the support client organizations (and direct managers in particular) offer to help TAWs develop their competencies. Because of this diversity, defining general CD policies for TAWs is difficult. General policies for CD do not match the core of a TAW construction; as such policies are based on a common ground for *all* TAWs whereas there is a lack of common ground due to this great diversity. We show in this dissertation that facilitating CD for TAWs via written policies can only be a worthwhile investment if such policies allow for and embrace this diversity. This demands tailor-made opportunities focused on TAWs' needs to fulfil their current assignment, as well as their needs for their future career. Both client organizations' and employment agencies' policies should have a 'tailor-made' focus as these policies, in turn, need to be aligned to collaboratively facilitate TAW's CD and their AC.

Emerging insight: via situationalist competence management to a TAW workplace pedagogy

The first insight discussed in this chapter led to the suggestion that CD should be discussed with
regard to TAWs' three basic psychological needs (section 3.1). Importantly, this does not imply that
all CD decisions should be a TAWs' responsibility. As Billett (2004) points out, the risk of assigning
agency about their own learning and development towards employees is that the responsibility is
fully left with the employees. This should be prevented, particularly in a triangular relationship in
which a TAW can easily fall between the policies of two organizations. This links to the second
insight described above of opting for OfCD personalization. Meeting the diversity that exists among
TAWs, requires excellent competence management by the organizations involved.

Specifically, OfCD personalization requires a *competence management* approach that allows for taking the *context* into account in which a TAW develops his/her competencies. This focus on the context matches a *situationalist* approach to competence management (cf. Capaldo, Iandoli, & Zollo, 2006), i.e. one that is based on the conviction that competencies are influenced by the aspects of the situation in which this competency is brought into practice, such as organizational culture, social interaction, and the unique way employees make sense of their jobs in an organization (e.g. Sandberg, 2000; Capaldo et al., 2006). A situationalist perspective opposes a more 'universalist approach' of competence management (cf. Capaldo et al., 2006) i.e. viewing competencies as mere personal characteristics that can be measured statistically, that define 'standard' competence profiles based on 'average' performances and, as such, define general policies for CD. In the situation of TAWs, it is precisely this context – in the sense of a temporary workplace and all the aspects that create the diversity among TAWs that creates OfCD (Billett, 2004) and that simultaneously reflects why general policies do not work. And, although, increasingly, the literature presents critiques regarding universalist approaches to competence management (Sandberg &

Pinnington, 2009), we show that, in practice, it is difficult to overcome this approach. On the employment agency's side, TAWs are subject to general policies regarding CD that do not (enough) provide for tailor-made opportunities and facilitation. Likewise, on the client organization's side, TAWs are often subject to CD policies that hold for *all* employees, by which the temporary character of TAWs' employment is subsequently provided as an argument for being hesitant with regard to investing in their CD.

A situationalist competence management approach enables moving towards a *TAW* workplace pedagogy (cf. Billett, 2002) that particularly focuses on *TAWs'* CD over the longer term. Following Billett (2002), a workplace pedagogy aims at developing a robust vocational practice in which CD is vital, as it plays an important role in transferring practices from the one context (i.e. workplace) to another. Translating this to the TAWs' situation, a TAW workplace pedagogy would include a personalised facilitation OfCD. Moreover, it would account for the specific nature of temporary work, as it looks *beyond* a single TAW assignment. Our findings show that this is the ultimate goal of a situationalist competence management approach.

#### 5.3.3 The crucial aspect of communication along OfCD

We show that bringing all parties involved in the triangular relationship of a TAW construction together has added-value, and that the dilemmas to be faced should be approached from the perspective of the *whole* triangle, with different stakeholders being represented. This approach made it possible to gather information about the *interactional dynamics* (cf. Peel & Boxall, 2005) amongst stakeholders. Moreover, having a multi-stakeholder group conversation (as we did in chapter 3) resulted in formulating points of improvement that would never have been formulated if the three parties were *not* brought together. It was valuable for all concerned to hear each other's opinions and experiences, and to *collaboratively* think of aspects that need and can be improved to better facilitate TAWs' CD. Moreover, in this way it became possible to discuss TAWs' CD at an *individual* level and it appeared to be beneficial when considering how a TAW's CD could be better facilitated. Organizing a joint conversation to explore all aspects of both the triangle as a whole and the related perspectives proved to be of scientific and practical benefit.

Still, this dissertation also illustrated that, to date, this joint conversation about TAWs' CD was lacking, and we provide indications for this. Overall, the lack of communication about TAW's CD among the parties involved in the TAW construction seemed to be a result of incompatible views and policies towards CD in general, towards TAWs in general, and towards the TAWs' CD. We show that all the stakeholders (i.e. TAWs, direct managers, HRM-advisors) acknowledged the importance of CD – both for a TAW him/herself and for both organizations where they are employed. Simultaneously, we see that the temporary character of a TAW-contract is given as a reason for being hesitant about facilitating TAWs' CD. Together, this resulted in the fact that TAWs' CD often

focuses on optimizing the *primary work processes* (cf. Poell & van der Krogt, 2014) at the *current* client organization, instead of facilitating TAWs' career development and employability. Inherent to this focus on the primary working processes, in cases that TAWs *did get* opportunities for CD, this was often organized within the context of the client organization without any interference from the employment agency.

#### *Emerging insight: Towards an integrative HRD system for TAWs*

Based on our first two conclusions in this dissertation, we argue that TAWs' CD will profit from a different view on stimulating CD by focusing on the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness (i.e. following Self Determination Theory). Additionally, they will profit from a TAW workplace pedagogy that goes beyond CD within one single TAW assignment, via a situationalist approach to competence management. Our third key insight – i.e. that communication between the three parties about TAWs' CD needs to be improved as this communication is crucial to let TAWs develop their competencies – goes even one step further. Specifically, this will strengthen the communication regarding TAWs' CD between all parties involved: i.e. a fundamental shift from a strategic approach towards a more integrative approach to HRD for TAWs is needed. HRD in this respect refers to the organization (i.e. structures and systems) of employees' learning within the context of organizations (cf. Poell & van der Krogt, 2014). Instead of fitting TAWs into existing, general HRD systems at client organizations and not involving the employment agency in CDrelated issues, an approach to HRD is required that accounts for different stakeholder views, interests and wishes with regard to CD as a starting point for a *joint* conversation. This form of an HRD system thus sees the communication between all stakeholders as an explicit part of the strategy to reach the full potential of a TAW construction. Moreover, such an HRD system goes beyond the boundaries of one single organization, as it requires the employment agency and the client organization to cooperate. In this respect, much can be learned from a Learning Network Theory (LNT) approach to HRD (van der Krogt, 1998; Poell, Chivers, van der Krogt, & Wildemeersch, 2000). The LNT approaches HRD as a result of different (co-existing) learning networks in which different professionals collaborate intensively to organize and facilitate CD, accepting and acting on the fact that these structures may change due to the dynamics of interacting professionals and work characteristics (Poell et al., 2000). It acknowledges that different stakeholders involved in HRD (or actors, as they are termed in this theory, e.g. managers, employees, HRD practitioners, and external colleagues) have their own ideas and beliefs on how HRD should be organized, what its functions are, and how these functions should be brought into practice (Poell & van der Krogt, 2014). Moreover, these stakeholders always "attempt to realize their own interests of professional development (...) and also try to get other actors to support their plans" (Poell & van der Krogt, 2014,

p.1045). As such, the LNT supports collaboration as an important means to creating HRD-structures in organizations *together*.

Two other aspects of the LNT are worthy of note, before returning to the issue of improving communication about TAWs' CD. The *first* aspect is that LNT describes that creating relevant experiences mainly occurs in the two key HRD processes of collective learning programmes and individual learning paths (Poell & van der Krogt, 2014). *Learning programmes* refer to a set of activities around a specific theme or topic about which a group of employees needs to be educated or towards which employees' experiences need to be directed. These learning paths are purposefully put together by HRD-practitioners, for example at the manager's initiative. *Learning paths* refer to an individual's personal route of gaining relevant experiences by means of the opportunities offered to them by organizations and beyond (Poell & van der Krogt, 2014).

A *second* aspect of LNT is the need for the freedom a learning system should provide for individual learners. Learners need to be in charge of their own learning process, decide themselves what to learn, and be able to create their own learning networks around them to support their learning (van der Krogt, 1998), as they know best what is relevant for them. In this way, this aspect aligns with Self Determination Theory, by arguing that autonomy is needed for employees to guide their own learning process.

Returning to the issue of improving communication on TAWs' CD, LNT teaches us that all stakeholders involved with a TAW's CD - i.e. TAWs themselves, their direct managers and HRD practitioners at the client organization, HRD-practitioners at the employment agency – are all members of one and the same learning network, instead of two separate learning networks at each organization. At an individual TAW level, these stakeholders need to interact and communicate together in order to function as one learning network. At an HRD level, this implication means that one and the same integrative HRD system is needed in which opportunities of both organizations are aligned and continuously negotiated at an individual TAW level. The employment agency can play an important role in bringing this into practice and in protecting this integrative HRD system. They are in the position to help TAWs find a new (TAW) assignment following the termination of a previous contract, thus they should manage all aspects of the TAW's long-term employability, career perspectives, and career plans. To do so, they should take the lead in starting up a conversation about a TAW's 'career learning path', that functions as a framework for their longer term CD. This learning path then can be filled, nuanced or fine-tuned, both with regard to the OfCD available at a client organization and the time frame for a particular TAW assignment. And, importantly, this learning path substantiates the fact that CD should be continuously facilitated during a temporary assignment and that it is a topic of joint conversations on a regular basis with the employment agency from the start of the temporary employment. In this way, a career learning path can create a situation that is beneficial for the individual TAW, the client organization where (s)he is employed

for a limited period of time, as well as for the employment agency. The employment agency specifically benefits from information on a TAW's longer career plans and wishes, as this can be used to create an ideal match between an assignment and the qualities and wishes of a candidate. In turn, it prevents the employment agency from being tempted to simply 'fill' a position with any 'random' TAW. This ideal match is beneficial for the client organization as it will result in them employing committed and learning-oriented TAWs.

These three theoretical insights demand a culture change when it comes to providing TAWs with OfCD that contributes to both their short-term *and* longer-term career, and when building a fruitful triangular employment construction. This culture change requires stratification of the different aspects: a different approach to facilitating TAWs' CD, a different approach to how these competencies can be managed and, eventually, a different approach to the HRD system. These three insights are presented in Figure 5.1.

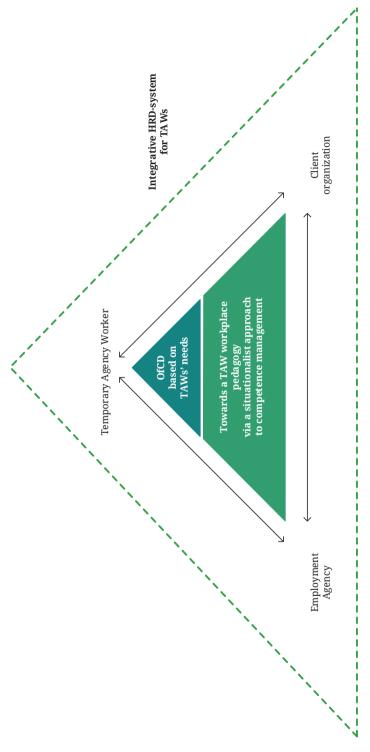


Figure 5.1. Overview of the three insights to increase the potential of a TAW construction derived from this dissertation.

# 5.4 Future research agenda

# 5.4.1 Future research agenda related to the emerging theoretical insights

Towards a theorization of trilateral organizational commitment

In the past decades, research has acknowledged the increasing flexibility among workforces. Remarkably however, theories on organizational (affective) commitment as well as instruments measuring employee's organisational commitment are still based on bilateral employment relationships (i.e. a professional relationship between an employee and *one* employer). Theoretically, these instruments provide us with limited information with regard to the perceived organizational commitment within triangular relationships. We show in this dissertation that this can be problematic for two reasons. First, organizational commitment about bilateral employeeemployer relationships are difficult to translate to triangular employment relationships, as the complexities accumulate with the involvement of an extra employment organization. Each relationship can be studied separately, but the complete triangle cannot be understood as it disregards the influence of factors that are constitutive to the underlying mechanisms, building on the premise "the whole is more than the sum of its parts" (cf. Ennen & Richter, 2010). Second, particular mechanisms apply to triangular employment relationships that deviate from those of bilateral employment relationships, having consequences for the perceived organizational commitment. Many studies with regard to TAWs deviate from the ideal of organization commitment theory to study all three dimensions (i.e. affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment, cf. Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Each of these dimensions need different formulations of guestions and are, in their current format, not (completely) applicable to TAWs. To my knowledge, all previous studies that aimed to explore TAWs' commitment, focused especially on affective commitment, disregarding the other dimensions. This can be explained by the difficulties described above. However, because of these difficulties and the specificities of a triangular relationship, it may be the case that TAWs' organizational commitment is differently manifested and that it may even result in different 'kinds' of commitment. There may be other foci of commitment alongside their AC towards both employment organizations, such as a primary focus on career commitment. Furthermore, a new type of organizational commitment may occur between the three parties within a TAW construction. Future research should explore the foci of TAWs' commitment and identify theories and accompanying instruments that justify a tripartite commitment theory that are particularly applicable to triangular employment situations.

5

#### *Testing TAWs' traditional approaches towards TAW constructions*

Future research should focus on testing TAWs' traditional approaches of their involvement in a TAW construction and the consequences for their learning behaviour, for their well-being, and for their employability. We show that these traditional approaches explain the effects found between TAWs' (fulfilled) expectations of OfCD and their AC towards their organizations, and it is plausible that these traditional approaches will have a large impact. However, these effects have not yet been tested. Researchers should explore to what extent these traditional approaches can be confirmed, how these approaches can be changed towards more contemporary approaches about TAW-work in particular or to flexible work in general, and answer the question what organizations should do to turn away from such traditional approaches.

# Further exploring TAWs' informal learning behaviour

We also advise that research should be conducted to further explore TAWs' informal learning activities as this remains an unexplored aspect of their CD. We show that TAWs' deliberate informal learning activities are explored and measured by means of self-perceptions. Although we purposely did so, we therefore only partially covered TAWs' CD, as informal learning comprises more than deliberate learning activities, and self-perceptions do not fully cover their participation in CD-activities. As such, future research should focus on TAWs' actual observable informal learning behaviour on the work floor and on getting more information about factors that foster or impede this learning behaviour. To go beyond personal factors that possibly influence TAWs' CD as studied in this dissertation, research should focus on exploring organizational factors influencing their CD. These include the learning climate (which learning climate aspects are of importance for TAWs' CD?) and team leader support. We need to understand how team leaders can find a balance between (1) engaging TAWs within the team and treating them equally compared to other team members (i.e. focus on relatedness), and simultaneously (2) treating them unequally to other team members and paying particular attention to them by acknowledging the complexities they have to deal with regarding CD.

#### Exploring crucial competencies for TAWs

The insight that CD *processes* need to be *personalised*, does not imply that there are no shared competencies that contribute to the extent to which an employee flourishes in a TAW construction. To date, research has focused on the processes to which TAWs are exposed, but has failed to define particular domain-generic employability-oriented competencies contributing to a TAW's success. 'Success', in this statement can be defined in terms of well-being in the context of a TAW construction, together with TAWs responsibility to initiate and be responsible for their own CD-activities, and for their affective commitment towards the two organizations. Research should

therefore focus on exploring *if* there are competencies that contribute to a flourishing career when working via TAW constructions, and if so, how these competencies can best be developed. This information could then be relevant during selection procedures for TAW assignments, in the sense that it contributes to improving the match between an assignment and the person fulfilling that assignment. If a TAW has a better picture of particular competencies that make him/her flourish, this changes the focus from the *content* of the assignment and the *content-related experiences* of a candidate, towards a selection procedure that is more focused on the *personal strengths* and *professional capabilities* of a candidate. For example, networking competencies, collaboration competencies (or, more generally formulated, social competencies), or learning competencies could then make a crucial difference to a TAW's success in fulfilling an assignment, however as yet, there is no evidence for such a statement.

# Further exploring the integrative HRD system for TAWs

Building on the emerging insights described in section 5.3.3, research should also focus on exploring the characteristics – or even the success factors – of an integrative HRD system for TAWs. Given the continually changing collaborations (i.e. an employment agency with different client organizations and even more different TAWs), and given the cross-organizational character, this HRD system has to have special features. It requires a collaboration beyond the policies of each separate organization and that also goes beyond the involvement of TAWs, their direct managers at the client organization, and HRM-advisors of the employment agency. Researchers should explore what is needed to bring this HRD system into practice so that (1) it serves both an employment agency's and a client organization's wishes, (2) that it is flexible enough to facilitate CD in a tailor-made fashion, and (3) that it is robust enough to take a TAW's career plans as a starting point for discussion. HRD-practitioners (i.e. HRD-policy makers, but also educators or trainers and content-experts, cf. Poell & van der Krogt, 2014) will play an important role when investigating this integrative HRD system. Hence, when further exploring what characteristics this integrative HRD system will need, it would also be valuable to explore what the role of HRD-practitioners could be in developing and maintaining this integrative HRD system.

# 5.4.2 Limitations and suggestions for future research

During our research, we noted some limitations in addition to the limitations mentioned in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. These limitations in turn result in suggestions for future research that add to the research agenda described in section 5.4.1, as the suggestions presented here are related to the methodological choices made in this dissertation.

Particularly, the participating TAWs in this dissertation were all employed via one and the same employment agency. Moreover, this employment agency focussed their businesses exclusively

on *non-profit* client organizations. Despite the fact that two of the three studies were based on a large sample of 449 participants, the results of this dissertation cannot therefore be generalized to TAWs working via other employment agencies and at profit client organizations. As such, crossvalidation with other TAW-contexts can be helpful. For instance, future research could aim at broadening the horizon by investigating different employment agencies. This does not necessarily mean that a more randomized approach to compare TAWs working via different employment agencies should be adopted. One lesson we learnt was that it did appear to be helpful to have one employment agency involved where all participants were employed – although this was initially seen as a serious drawback of the research design. The involvement of one employment agency created a ground for interpreting the results as it provided an equal situation for all TAWs with regard to the organizational context of the employment agency. Inherent to a triangular relationship, it would have been more complicated to compare situations and perceptions of TAWs if all factors that determined their situation, differed. Therefore, the TAW field of research may benefit from research among TAWs working for other employment agencies, as well as involving other agencies and the client organizations they do business with, while not randomizing all perspectives of the triangle. Define one point of reference (i.e. one and the same client organization, or one and the same employment agency) in order to be able to interpret the results in their proper context.

Furthermore, the results of this dissertation could be cross-validated with TAWs employed at profit client organizations rather than at non-profit ones, and/or focus on comparing the situations of TAWs at these different types of organizations. As mentioned,, the TAWs that participated in the studies in this dissertation were all employed at non-profit organizations, being governmental institutions at local, regional or national level, educational institutions, health care organizations, and cultural institutions. Plausibly, our results are influenced by the fact that employees are employed at a non-profit client organization, for example, with regard to expectations and fulfilled expectations of OfCD by a client organization. On the one hand, the participating TAWs may have expected a certain amount of 'care' for them which could have influenced their expectations regarding OfCD offered at their client organization being higher than if they were employed at a profit client organization. On the other, it can be argued that TAWs working at profit client organizations may expect more career opportunities, as these kinds of organizations may be subject to sudden fluctuations and growth, increasing the chances for staying at this organization. Both lines of reasoning would lead to different patterns between non-profit and profit client organizations, but these are based on expectations rather than on studied phenomena. As such, researchers need to identify to what extent these expectations hold true, and what the exact differences are for the TAW and for their employment organizations.

# 5.5 Practical implications

It is the responsibility of all the stakeholders of TAW constructions (i.e. TAWs and their employment organizations) *and* the government to make the culture change regarding TAWs' CD happen. In this section, we describe practical implications for these different stakeholders: the Dutch national government, employment agencies, client organizations, and TAWs.

# 5.5.1 Dutch national government

The Netherlands is a leading country when it comes to the employment of TAWs relative to the total number of employees (see text box 1.1). The number of TAWs in this country as well as the dependency of many (client) organizations on their TAW-personnel are reasons for the Dutch national government to take the needs of this group of employees seriously and to develop ways of facilitating and improving their working conditions. Moreover, the Netherlands is one of the seven European countries that have established so-called "bipartite funds" to stimulate TAW training (Joint Eurociett/UNI Europa Project, 2013). This shows that the urgency to work on TAWs' CD and on their employability has reached the level of national government. To facilitate this even better, the Dutch national government should contribute to the culture change regarding TAWs' CD by facilitating organizations in creating a shift towards an integrative HRD system for TAWs. The government is in the position to stimulate a more collaborative way of working between employment agencies and client organizations when it comes to TAWs' CD, and they could initiate the search for ways to bring such an HRD system into practice by bringing different professionals together and facilitating these meetings. This facilitation does not necessarily involve financial support for designing integrative HRD systems or for TAWs' CD. Rather, the Dutch government can make a difference by creating awareness within employment agencies and client organizations regarding the need to collaborate for facilitating TAWs' CD via integrative HRD systems, and the fact that this will pay-off in terms of committed, eager and independent employees. Branch organizations may also have a voice in creating this awareness, as they are in the position to let different organizations in a particular branch learn from each other.

Furthermore, as many TAWs work for national, regional or local government organizations (i.e. the TAWs' client organizations in this respect), the Dutch government should act as a role model for other organizations in the Netherlands. They could examine their own ways of organizing and facilitating TAWs' CD via an integrative HRD system, and thereby improve their relationships with employment agencies.

# 5.5.2 Employment agencies and client organizations

The way employment agencies collaborate with client organizations regarding CD, is an important success factor. They should be encouraged to work together and develop an integrative HRD system

involving all stakeholders of both organizations. This integrative HRD system can be perceived as part of a *long-term* joint business strategy. This system would facilitate employment agencies and their business partner-client organizations with scheduling TAWs' CD from the start of their business collaboration, and from the start of a TAW's employment. The latter aspect would make it possible to discuss and plan *individual* TAW's CD and facilitate this CD in practice. This plan has different layers inherent to an integrative HRD system: it requires strict lines of communication between stakeholders *within* organizations (for example, among direct managers and HR-professionals), and also *between* organizations (for example, between direct managers of client organizations and the HRD-department of the employment agency).

Moreover, both employment organizations should be encouraged to acknowledge and value informal learning opportunities in particular. Restricting TAWs to taking part in formal learning activities would prevent them from gaining valuable new insights that contribute to their work – now and in their further career. We have reported that these informal learning activities are difficult topics of discussion between employment agency and client organization, as it is almost impossible to treat TAWs equally in this respect, and because it is almost impossible to find an equal balance between the two organizations' financial support; informal learning activities are difficult to express in terms of euros or dollars. However, our findings should encourage organizations to leave this equality principle and take diversity among TAWs as a starting point for discussing their learning needs – in terms of *content* as well as in terms of *kinds* of learning activities.

Employment agencies, in particular, are encouraged to help TAWs map their longer-term career path and formulate their needs and wishes for CD - even if a TAW is only employed once and/or for a short period of time. Mapping these needs and wishes for CD will then shape the TAW's individual learning programme, as follows from Learning Network Theory (section 5.3.3). Despite the fact that in this TAW-context, an individual learning programme is explicitly stressed instead of a collective learning programme as posited by LNT, it resembles a learning programme by means of its planned and purposive character and its focus on the longer term. Employment agencies are in the position to look further than a single TAW assignment and are responsible for helping TAWs find the most appropriate next assignment. Although the TAW is responsible for managing their own career path in the first place (section 5.5.3), the employment agency can help them with this. In addition, employment agencies should be encouraged to ensure an appropriate match between an assignment and a candidate, by focusing on the candidate rather than on the position to be filled. This includes matching persons and positions both on personal characteristics – of which their learning goal orientation and career perspective may be part – and on their work experience and curriculum vitae. This then contributes to a longer-term perspective of the partnership between a TAW and the employment agency, and also strengthens the position of the employment agency in the triangular employment relationship.

Client organizations, in particular, should invest in an employment relationship with a TAW, even if this TAW is only employed for a short period such as two months. Discussing OfCD from the start of employment, as described above, is a way to bring this investment alive. But the actual investment is captured in the way that it coincides with TAWs own ideas about their future plans, and with their longer-term CD plans. This means that a (direct manager at a) client organization together with an individual TAW concretizes his/her individual learning programme and defines how this TAW assignment can contribute to their longer-term learning path given the opportunities available at this client organization. In doing so, client organizations need to dare to think beyond the boundaries of the function that needs to be filled temporarily, and to give TAWs the freedom and autonomy to develop their competencies beyond the function's boundaries. This autonomy pay itself back by means of committed TAWs who feel welcome at this client organization and, for this reason, are motivated to work harder.

#### 5.5.3 TAWs themselves

TAWs can contribute to changing the culture of their CD by *being aware* of their position in a triangular employment relationship. This awareness includes that they deliberately work on their competencies as a means of improving their employability. The triangular employment relation makes it possible for them to ask for OfCD at both organizations. As such, they should not underestimate the OfCD available at the employment agency, and the fact that they have two organizations to ask for OfCD is valuable in itself. Moreover, TAWs can initiate the joint conversation about their CD, take responsibility for their own career path, and therefore behave like emancipated and autonomous professionals (cf. Kessels & Poell, 2004). Even if an integrative HRD system is in place to facilitate them with regard to CD, it will be a challenge to align this system with an individual TAW's situation. Therefore, TAWs need to have the courage to initiate this conversation themselves if it is not organized for them, or if their employment agency and their client organization tend to operate separately to each other.

Moreover, TAWs are encouraged to think of their longer-term career plans and to firstly discuss their plan with the employment agency, i.e. their individual learning paths as discussed above. These learning paths do not have to be detailed; they serve as a framework for gathering different experiences during different assignments (and, if applicable, at client organizations) and, as such, serve as a tool for the TAW to further discuss their CD with a client organization. The plan would help a TAW to think of CD beyond a single assignment and help them to deliberately work on their ambitions. In addition, it would serve as a guideline for a client organization *and* the employment agency, as it provides information about the kinds of CD-activities that are relevant for an individual TAW and what is needed to facilitate these activities. The career plan can have different implications for the collaboration between the two organizations, for example by

describing the differences between a TAW who primarily benefits from certifications for performing his/her job, or for an employee who primarily looks for opportunities to broaden his/her experiences or network. Every assignment, every new organizational context in which a TAW works, contributes to the set of experiences and may bring new challenges: seeing and valuing these challenges is the path to success.

# 5.6 Concluding remarks

TAWs in the Netherlands have a relatively strong position as their unique employment construction is explicitly recognized (text box 1.2, page 13), as well as is their need to continuously learn and develop (text box 1.3, page 16). However in practice, much can be gained when it comes to TAWs' CD. In this dissertation, we revealed three complexities with regard to the organization and facilitation of TAWs' CD that are *crucial* for ensuring that the TAW construction actually functions as a *triangle*. We show the need for an integrative HRD-approach that goes beyond the traditional picture of *one* employee and *one* employer that are bonded during the employee's entire career. This picture no longer fits today's labour market in which 20 per cent of the Dutch working population are employed via temporary employment constructions, and it especially does not fit the TAW constructions. At policy level, national and international and national initiatives have already initiated a reversal, and client organizations and employment agencies recognize the importance of CD. Yet, in practice, the triangular character of a TAW construction still leads to TAWs not being able to benefit from CD opportunities.

Creating a *long-term* focus within *a TAW construction* by facilitating and organizing OfCD for TAWs may sound like a paradox. The issue of TAWs' CD is often approached as being two aspects that are difficult to reconcile. Nevertheless, based on our findings, we believe that CD can be beneficial to all stakeholders in existing TAW constructions. The triangular employment construction requires investments by all three parties (and its stakeholders) to function as an actual triangle; they *all* should mobilise their efforts to make this happen. CD needs to be seen both as *a means* to maintaining a regular joint conversation and remain on speaking terms, and as *a goal* in itself, to generate a profitable situation for all parties involved. Only then, can the triangular employment construction come closer to achieving its ideal.

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# **English summary**

#### Introduction

Temporary workers are increasingly being employed to compensate for fluctuations in an organization's staffing levels. Of this extremely diverse group, one group gas grown fastest in recent years: the temporary *agency* workers (TAWs). TAWs are officially employed by an employment agency and work for a client organisation for a limited period of time. In other words, they are employed in a triangular employment construction in which they have to deal with two employment organizations. Due to the unique character of their employment construction, increasing attention is being paid to this group in the scientific literature.

The literature describes TAW constructions as an ideal solution for all three parties involved. *Client organizations* have the flexibility to start and end a work relationship with employees for the period their expertise is needed or relevant. The core business of *employment agencies* is creating matches between a client organization and a professional with expertise of value for this client organization. *TAWs* themselves gain the opportunity to develop their employability as they can work in different jobs and roles in different organizational settings. In practice, however, TAW constructions are not as ideal as they should or could be, and this 'ideal' picture has recently been critically reviewed in the literature. The main critique is that TAWs do not experience any benefits from working via a TAW construction. Despite the fact that current TAW-contracts are longer than in the past, TAWs still experience job insecurity and feel that they are treated differently to other 'types' of employees (e.g. permanent or directly-hired temporary employees). An important consequence of these experiences is that it reduces their commitment towards their client organization and employment agency; commitment is a crucial contributing factor to a healthy triangular relationship in TAW constructions.

This situation inspired me to start this PhD-project. I wanted to dig deeper into the underlying reasons for the mismatch between the ideal and real situation of TAWs, and search for ways to reduce this mismatch. Research published on this subject has, to date, referred to problems arising in and from TAW constructions, but the reasons why these problems have arisen is little discussed. In this dissertation, I focus on unravelling these problems and exploring which aspects can contribute to a fruitful TAW construction. By 'fruitful', I refer to a situation in which all parties benefit from this construction, including the TAWs themselves. Moreover, it refers to a situation in which long-term goals are pursued rather than short-term goals. I have taken a competence development approach as opposed to the psychological or (strategic) HRM-approaches commonly used in TAW research. Competence development (CD) refers to the holistic process of acquiring new meaningful context-specific clusters of knowledge, skills and attitudes by means of formal and



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informal learning activities (cf. Tynjälä, 2008) required for successful performance (Mulder, 2006). CD provides a positive perspective to the TAW construction, as it has potential benefits for all parties involved, and thus, in the longer term, it can contribute to the ideal picture of this employment construction. Therefore, the main research question was formulated as:

What is the potential of competence development for improving temporary agency work constructions?

In this dissertation, I have explored different aspects of competence development, starting with TAWs' expectations and fulfilled expectations with regard to their opportunities for CD in Chapter 2, followed by the conditions for CD in Chapter 3, and finally the actual informal learning activities in which TAWs were involved in Chapter 4. In the following section, I further elaborate on each chapter. Thereafter, I present the main conclusions of this dissertation as well as emerging insights.

#### Chapter descriptions and main findings

Based on Psychological Contract theory and Social Exchange theory, in Chapter 2 we report on the extent to which TAW's affective commitment (AC) towards the client organization and towards the employment agency related to their expectations and fulfilled expectations of opportunities for competence development (OfCD). Based on survey data of 449 TAWs that were employed via the same employment agency, we conducted multiple regression analyses to explore the relationships between OfCD and AC. Furthermore, we explored qualitative data bottom-up and by categorization to understand TAWs' perceptions of both their own and employment organizations' responsibilities for offering OfCD. In Chapter 2, I show that TAWs' expectations of getting OfCD from their client organization is positively related to their AC towards that client organization. We found comparable effects with regard to the employment agency, although there were fewer positive effects of TAWs' expectations of OfCD from the employment agency on their AC towards the employment agency. In addition, our results showed smaller but positive effects of TAWs' expectations of OfCD from the one organization on their AC towards the other organization. Moreover, a 'surprising' effect was found: if TAWs got more OfCD at the employment agency, this contributed to their AC towards both the employment agency and the client organization. These results indicate that TAWs tend to be primarily focused on their client organization: this is the organization where they have the clearest expectations with regard to OfCD, and where the effects of expectations and fulfilled expectations of OfCD on TAWs' AC are the largest.

Our results also show that TAWs feel hesitant towards the employment agency with regards to OfCD, and that their level of AC towards the employment agency is more easily affected by disappointment with the OfCD offered by the employment agency compared to the client

organization. Importantly, the positive *cross* effects illustrate that the potential of the *triangular* relationship should not be underestimated: if TAWs feel that one of the two organizations is taking good care of them, this pays off with respect to the perceived AC towards the other organization. Together, these results indicate that TAW constructions do not always work as an actual triangle, as perceived by TAWs (Figure 2.2). Instead, they perceive their employment relationship as one with the client organization; the employment agency is viewed as a disturbing factor rather than an employer where they can discuss CD at an equal level to their discussions with their client organization.

In **Chapter 3** we explored why TAW constructions do not work as an actual triangle, as well as what is needed to utilize the triangular employment relationship better. The triangular relationship was explored in relation to Psychological Contract (PC) theory and Social Dilemma (SD) theory, viewed through a lens of CD. Specifically, we aimed to find conditions for TAWs' CD as expressed by different stakeholders, i.e. the TAW, the direct manager at the client organization, and an employment agency HRM-advisor. We conducted a multiple case study (n= 7 cases) and, in each case, the three stakeholder groups were brought together in a group interview. In this chapter, we reveal three impeding factors and four fostering factors for TAWs' CD (Figure 3.1 and Table 3.2). Remarkably, all the *impeding* factors are related to the position of the employment agency in the triangular employment construction. Taking all impeding and fostering factors together and interpreting them in terms of PC theory and SD theory, it becomes clear that improving the communication between the two employment organizations is crucial for TAWs' CD. Moreover, this communication is crucial for a fruitful triangular relationship in which all stakeholders together strive for the maximum result of a triangular employment relationship.

In chapter 3, we also show that there is room for improvement with regard to TAWs' informal learning opportunities. CD is often discussed in terms of training courses and certification. For many employees this is a necessary aspect of competence development, but it also makes a TAW dependent on the willingness and financial resources of (one of) the employment organizations.

In **Chapter 4**, we elaborate further on these *informal* learning activities. In particular, we explored *which different profiles of TAWs can be distinguished regarding their deliberate informal learning activities and personal factors that relate to this informal learning behaviour.* Previous research shows that informal learning has the potential to (partly) compensate the lack of formal learning activities that TAWs have to deal with, as it gives them control over their own learning process; these findings were confirmed in Chapter 3. Informal learning is dependent on individual preferences and personal characteristics. To meet this personal character of informal learning, we searched for different TAW profiles. Deliberate informal learning was operationalised by means of three crucial informal learning activities: reflection (individual learning activity), asking for feedback, and knowledge sharing (social learning activities). Personal factors known to influence

informal learning and, as such, related to the specific situation of TAWs, included self-efficacy, learning goal orientation, affective commitment, and career perspective.

Latent Class Analysis (n=449) revealed five different TAW profiles (see Figure 4.1) were named as: (1) the permanent TAW, (2) the employable TAW, (3) the compliant TAW, (4) the selfconfident TAW, and (5) the resisting TAW. In Chapter 4, we learn two lessons. The first is that these five profiles together confirm the heterogeneity within TAWs regarding their deliberate informal learning behaviour and related personal factors. This heterogeneity indicates that it is advisable that client organizations meet this personal character in their CD-policies, in agreements with the TAW him/herself and in the business agreements with the employment agency. This means that these agreements and policies should leave enough room for TAWs to find their own ways and learning opportunities, and that they, at an individual level, also include opportunities for being facilitated and supervised in their informal learning. Second, the profiles differ regarding the variables 'asking for feedback' and 'knowledge sharing'. This is interesting given the fact that both aspects cover the social informal learning activities for which a level of interpersonal trust and cooperation is needed (Ipe, 2003; Levin & Cross, 2004). Moreover, knowledge sharing is known to be dependent on the extent to which people have a shared language and a shared vision (Levin & Cross, 2004; Mooradian, Renzl, & Matzler, 2006). All of these characteristics may be a challenge for a TAW due to their temporary stay at an organization, and within a particular team of colleagues. Moreover, the five profiles differed most with regard to TAWs' learning goal orientation, indicating that TAWs differ in the extent to which they view 'learning' as a primary goal of their work. This illustrates that a great deal can be gained for TAWs with regard to their focus on their employability.

#### Conclusions

Our findings from studying TAWs' CD have led to three main insights which comprise three *complexities* of the triangular employment relationship of a TAW construction, viewed from a CD-approach. Simultaneously, each conclusion shows one aspect of potential in order let a TAW construction function as an actual *triangle*.

First, we show that TAWs' perceptions of their involvement in a TAW construction is traditional, preventing them from paying explicit attention to CD. Moreover, we confirmed the potential of OfCD for a TAW construction. Offering TAWs OfCD contributes to their AC towards both of their employment parties. As such, according to TAWs, OfCD is a beneficial instrument which helps them become more involved and engaged with the client organization and, to a lesser extent, with their employment agency. This, in turn, contributes to a more contemporary approach of a TAW construction.

Second, this dissertation shows that there is much diversity among TAWs, which is one of the reasons that current CD policies fail. This dissertation shows that personalizing TAWs' OfCD, i.e. if TAWs are offered tailor-made OfCD, encourages them to do participate in CD-activities and to work on their ambitions. Moreover, personalization of OfCD is needed to deal with the enormous diversity among TAWs, a fact that appears throughout this dissertation. Specifically, personalizing CD and stimulating and/or facilitating opportunities for social informal learning activities provide an extra key to success.

Third, we conclude that CD is often not seen as a topic that should be discussed with all parties together, whereas both TAWs and their employers recognize the added value of such joint discussions. To facilitate TAWs' CD and as such the triangular relationship as a whole, communication between the three parties (i.e. the TAW, and those responsible for facilitating CD at the client organization and at the employment agency) is a crucial factor and need to be intensified.

#### **Emerging insights**

As the complexities described above simultaneously reflect three aspects of potential, it can be argued that these aspects are *crucial* for enabling a TAW construction to function as a true *triangle*. Therefore, three insights related to TAWs' CD have emerged to meet these complexities and to show a theoretical fundament for the potential beneficial situation for TAWs, their client organizations and their employment agency.

First, if we want CD to contribute to TAW's AC and to help them flourish in their work, their expectations of OfCD as well as the (traditional) image of a TAW construction need to be taken seriously. We argue that this necessitates a different research focus on TAWs' CD; it requires a theoretical approach that looks at TAWs' reasons for learning and how they interpret their CD within the context of their TAW construction, rather than focusing only on the kinds of learning activities (i.e. training courses) they can undertake within the (financial) boundaries of a temporary contract. Specifically, the Self Determination Theory can provide this different approach as it concerns people's "growth tendencies and innate psychological needs that are the basis for self-motivation and personality integration, as well as for the conditions that foster those positive processes" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.68). Self Determination Theory describes three basic needs that are essential for optimal functioning: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Taking these three basic psychological needs as a starting point for studying TAWs' expectations of OfCD and their AC towards both organizations, we learn that workplaces must facilitate these basic needs for each individual TAW. This then helps TAWs to continuously develop their competencies and, in that way, create a fruitful learning environment in which they flourish.

However, building on TAWs' basic psychological needs does *not* imply that all CD decisions should be the TAWs' responsibility. Given the triangular relationship, a TAW can easily fall between

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the policies of two organizations, therefore a *second* emerging insight is that OfCD personalization requires a *competence management* approach of client organizations and employment agencies that takes the *context* into account within which a TAW develops his/her competencies. This focus on the context matches a *situationalist* approach to competence management (cf. Capaldo, Iandoli, & Zollo, 2006), i.e. one that is based on the conviction that competencies are influenced by the aspects of the situation in which these competencies are brought into practice, such as organizational culture, social interaction, and the unique way employees make sense of their jobs in an organization (e.g. Sandberg, 2000; Capaldo et al., 2006). A situationalist competence management approach facilitates the move towards a *TAW workplace pedagogy* (cf. Billett, 2002) that focuses on *TAWs*' CD *in the longer term* and looks *beyond* a single TAW assignment. This type of TAW workplace pedagogy thus places learning and development in the perspective of a TAW's career, rather than as a facet of a single TAW assignment. Our findings show that this is the ultimate goal of a situationalist competence management approach for TAWs.

We even go one step further, by arguing that to facilitate and stimulate TAWs' CD and to meet the complexity of communicating between the three parties in a TAW construction, a fundamental shift of HRD is needed for TAWs. Instead of fitting TAWs into existing, general HRD-systems at client organizations and not involving the employment agency in CD-related issues, an HRD approach is required that accounts for different stakeholder views, interests and wishes with regard to CD as an explicit *part of the strategy* to reach the full potential of a TAW construction. Following the Learning Network Theory (van der Krogt, 1998; Poell, Chivers, van der Krogt, & Wildemeersch, 2000), all stakeholders involved with a TAW's CD are members of one and the same learning network, that need to interact and communicate together in order to function as one learning network. At an HRD level, this implication means that one and the same integrative HRD-system is needed in which opportunities of both organizations are aligned and continuously negotiated at an individual TAW level.

Together, these theoretical insights demand a culture change when it comes to providing TAWs with OfCD that contributes to both their short-term *and* longer-term career, and when building a fruitful triangular employment construction. This culture change requires stratification of the different aspects: a different approach to facilitating TAWs' CD, a different approach to how these competencies can be managed and, lastly, a different approach to the HRD-system. These three insights are presented in Figure 5.1.

Importantly, our findings should be seen in the perspective of a specific context. That is, the TAWs participating in this dissertation were all employed via one and the same employment agency. Moreover, this employment agency's business focus was exclusively on *non-profit* client organizations. Despite the fact that two of the three studies were based on a large sample of 449 participants, our results cannot therefore be generalized to TAWs working via other employment

agencies and /or at profit client organizations. As such, cross-validation with other TAW-contexts is necessary.

#### Concluding remarks

TAWs in the Netherlands have a relatively strong position as their unique employment construction is explicitly recognized (text box 1.2), as well as is their need to continuously learn and develop (text box 1.3). Yet, in practice, the triangular character of a TAW construction still leads to TAWs being unable to benefit from CD opportunities. Creating a *long-term* focus within *a TAW construction* by facilitating and organizing OfCD for TAWs may sound like a paradox: the issue of TAWs' CD is often approached as being two aspects that are difficult to reconcile. Nevertheless, based on our findings, we believe that CD can be beneficial to all stakeholders in existing TAW constructions. The triangular employment construction requires investments by all three parties (and its stakeholders) to function as an actual triangle; they *all* should mobilise their efforts to make this happen. CD needs to be seen both as *a means* to maintaining a regular joint conversation and remain on speaking terms, and as *a goal* in itself, to generate a profitable situation for all parties involved. Only then, the triangular employment construction can come closer to achieving its ideal.

# Nederlandse samenvatting

#### Introductie

Werknemers worden steeds vaker via tijdelijke contracten aangesteld bij organisaties met het doel fluctuaties in het personeelsbestand op te vangen. Er bestaan veel verschillende vormen van tijdelijke contracten en daardoor is de groep tijdelijke medewerkers erg divers. Dit proefschrift richt zich specifiek op één van de subgroepen tijdelijke medewerkers, namelijk *uitzendkrachten*. Ten opzichte van andere vormen van tijdelijk werk, is het aantal uitzendkrachten de afgelopen jaren het meest gegroeid. Uitzendkrachten zijn officieel in dienst bij een uitzendorganisatie, maar worden tijdelijk te werk gesteld bij een klantorganisatie. Zij zijn dus te werk gesteld via een *triangulaire* arbeidsconstructie en hebben te maken met twee werkgevers. Dit maakt de arbeidsconstructie uniek ten opzichte van andere arbeidsconstructies en om deze reden wordt in de wetenschappelijke literatuur steeds meer aandacht besteed aan het wel en wee van uitzendkrachten.

In de literatuur werden uitzendconstructies aanvankelijk beschreven als een ideale contractvorm voor alle betrokken partijen. Het geeft klantorganisaties de flexibiliteit om een medewerker enkel in dienst te nemen voor de periode dat zijn of haar specifieke expertise nodig is. Uitzendkrachten zelf kunnen via deze arbeidsconstructie bij verschillende organisaties ervaring opdoen in verschillende rollen of functies, waardoor hun duurzame inzetbaarheid vergroot. En uitzendorganisaties specialiseren zich in het maken van een goede match tussen medewerkers en klantorganisaties. Steeds vaker blijkt echter dat dit ideaalbeeld in de praktijk niet klopt en ook in de wetenschappelijke literatuur is het bekritiseerd. Het grootste punt van kritiek is dat uitzendkrachten geen meerwaarde ervaren van deze constructie. Ondanks het feit dat zij tegenwoordig vaak langer binnen één klantorganisatie werken dan in het verleden het geval was, ervaren uitzendkrachten nog steeds werkonzekerheid. Bovendien wordt gesteld dat zij zich vaak anders behandeld voelen dan andere 'typen' medewerkers (zoals vaste medewerkers, of tijdelijke medewerkers die direct in dienst zijn bij een organisatie). Een belangrijk gevolg van deze ervaringen is dat zij zich minder betrokken voelen bij zowel de klantorganisatie als de uitzendorganisatie. Dit is zorgwekkend omdat organisatiebetrokkenheid een cruciale factor is voor het creëren van een gezonde triangulaire arbeidsrelatie.

Deze situatie heeft mij geïnspireerd om op dit onderwerp te promoveren. Graag wilde ik meer weten over de onderliggende redenen van de discrepantie tussen het ideaalbeeld van een uitzendconstructie en de realiteit, en graag wilde ik op zoek gaan naar manieren om deze discrepantie te verkleinen. Recente publicaties over dit onderwerp richten zich met name op de problemen die ontstaan in en door uitzendconstructies, maar de redenen waarom deze problemen



ontstaan, zijn tot dusver weinig onderzocht. In dit proefschrift heb ik deze problemen ontrafeld en heb ik op exploratieve wijze onderzocht welke aspecten bijdragen aan een gezonde en vruchtbare uitzendconstructie. 'Vruchtbaar' betekent in dit verband een situatie die voor alle betrokken partijen – dus inclusief de uitzendkrachten zelf – voordelig is. Daarnaast refereert 'vruchtbaar' naar een situatie waarin lange termijndoelen worden nagestreefd in plaats van korte termijndoelen, zoals nu vaak het geval is.

Om dit te onderzoeken heb ik vanuit onderwijskundig perspectief naar uitzendconstructies gekeken, in plaats van bijvoorbeeld een psychologisch of (strategisch) HRM perspectief zoals eerder veel gedaan is. Specifiek heb ik mij gericht op de *mogelijkheden voor competentieontwikkeling* van uitzendkrachten. Onder competentieontwikkeling versta ik het proces van het opdoen van nieuwe kennis, vaardigheden en attitudes die betekenis krijgen door de context waarin ze worden ontwikkeld, en die nodig zijn om succesvol te kunnen presteren (Mulder, 2006). Hierbij veronderstel ik dat deze nieuwe kennis, vaardigheden en attitudes worden opgedaan door middel van formele en informele leeractiviteiten (cf. Tynjälä, 2008). Het is aannemelijk dat competentieontwikkeling (CO) de voordelen biedt waarnaar we op zoek zijn en het kan op deze manier op de lange termijn bijdragen aan het ideaalbeeld van deze arbeidsconstructie. Zodoende luidt de onderzoeksvraag van dit proefschrift:

Wat leren we over de uitzendconstructies en mogelijke verbeteringen daarvan als we specifiek kijken naar competentieontwikkeling van uitzendkrachten?

In dit proefschrift zijn verschillende aspecten van CO onderzocht. In hoofdstuk 2 stonden verwachtingen van uitzendkrachten ten aanzien van CO centraal, evenals de vervulde verwachtingen. Hoofdstuk 3 focuste zich op de condities voor CO, en in hoofdstuk 4 stonden de daadwerkelijke informele leeractiviteiten van uitzendkrachten centraal. In de volgende paragraaf wordt verder ingegaan op elk hoofdstuk. Daarna volgen de belangrijkste conclusies en de inzichten die dit proefschrift hebben opgeleverd.

#### Belangrijkste bevindingen per hoofdstuk

Gebaseerd op de Psychologische Contract (PC) theorie en de 'Social Exchange' (SE) theorie, rapporteren we in **hoofdstuk 2** over *de mate waarin affectieve organisatiebetrokkenheid (AB) van uitzendkrachten bij de klantorganisatie en de uitzendorganisatie samenhangen met de mogelijkheden die zij krijgen voor CO.* Door middel van vragenlijstdata over 449 uitzendkrachten die werkzaam waren bij dezelfde uitzendorganisatie, zijn multipele regressieanalyses uitgevoerd om de relatie tussen AB en mogelijkheden voor CO te onderzoeken. Bovendien zijn open-antwoorddata op kwalitatieve wijze onderzocht door deze bottom-up te categoriseren. Aan de hand van deze

kwalitatieve data konden we de percepties van uitzendkrachten ten aanzien van hun eigen verantwoordelijkheid én de die van hun beide werkgevers (d.w.z. de uitzendorganisatie en de klantorganisatie) met betrekking tot het opzoeken en aanbieden van mogelijkheden voor CO, beter begrijpen.

In hoofdstuk 2 wordt duidelijk dat de verwachtingen van uitzendkrachten omtrent het krijgen van mogelijkheden voor CO van hun klantorganisatie *positief* samenhangen met hun affectieve betrokkenheid naar deze organisatie. We vonden vergelijkbare resultaten voor de uitzendorganisatie, maar de positieve samenhang tussen deze aspecten was kleiner. Daarnaast hebben we kleine maar positieve verbanden gevonden tussen de verwachtingen van uitzendkrachten ten aanzien van mogelijkheden voor CO *bij de klantorganisatie* en de AB *naar de uitzendorganisatie*, en vice versa (kruiseffecten). Bovendien vonden we een zgn. 'verrassingseffect': als uitzendkrachten *meer* mogelijkheden voor CO kregen bij de uitzendorganisatie dan zij verwachtten, dan leidde dit tot meer AB naar beide werkgevers. Deze resultaten laten zien dat uitzendkrachten zich vooral lijken te focussen op de klantorganisatie: dit is de organisatie waar zij de meeste verwachtingen van hebben ten aanzien van CO en waar de effecten van (vervulde) verwachtingen met betrekking tot CO op AB het grootst zijn.

Verder laten de resultaten zien dat uitzendkrachten zich terughoudend opstellen naar de uitzendorganisatie als het gaat om CO. Maar de positieve *kruiseffecten* tonen aan dat wanneer een uitzendkracht het gevoel heeft dat één van beide werkgevers goed voor hem/haar zorgt, dit zich ook terugbetaalt aan de andere werkgever. Hieruit is op te maken dat het potentieel van een triangulaire arbeidsconstructie niet onderschat moet worden. Tezamen laten de resultaten van hoofdstuk 2 vooral zien dat uitzendconstructies, volgens uitzendkrachten, momenteel nog niet werken als een *triangulaire* arbeidsconstructie (zie Figuur 2.2). Zij ervaren met name een arbeidsrelatie met hun klantorganisatie en lijken de uitzendorganisatie eerder als 'stoorzender' op deze relatie te zien, dan dat zij de uitzendorganisatie zien als een werkgever met wie zij hun CO kunnen bespreken.

In **hoofdstuk 3** is onderzocht *waarom uitzendconstructies niet werken als een* daadwerkelijke triangulaire arbeidsconstructie, en ook wat nodig is om deze arbeidsconstructie beter te benutten. Deze vraag is onderzocht aan de hand van PC theorie en de Sociale Dilemma (SD) theorie, en richtte zich specifiek op mogelijkheden voor CO. Het doel was om bij verschillende betrokkenen (d.w.z. uitzendkrachten, leidinggevenden bij klantorganisaties, en HRM-adviseurs bij de uitzendorganisatie) te achterhalen wat de condities zijn om uitzendkrachten te laten deelnemen in CO-activiteiten. Zodoende is een multiple case studie uitgevoerd (n= 7 cases), waarin door middel van groepsinterviews, voor elke case de drie betrokken partijen zijn gevraagd naar de ervaringen en ideeën ten aanzien van CO.

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Deze studie leverde drie belemmerende en vier bevorderende factoren op ten aanzien van CO van uitzendkrachten (zie Figuur 3.1 en Tabel 3.2). Op basis van deze gevonden factoren wordt duidelijk dat het voor CO van uitzendkrachten cruciaal is om de communicatie tussen de twee werkgevers te verbeteren. Bovendien is een goede communicatie tussen de uitzendorganisatie en de klantorganisatie cruciaal voor het creëren van een vruchtbare triangulaire arbeidsconstructie waarin tezamen wordt gestreefd naar het maximale resultaat voor alle betrokkenen. Hoofdstuk 3 laat ook zien dat er ruimte is voor verbetering als het gaat om het aanbieden en creëren van informele leermogelijkheden voor uitzendkrachten. Het viel op dat CO vaak wordt besproken in termen van training of zelfs opleidingen, oftewel formele leeractiviteiten. Dit is een belangrijk onderdeel van CO voor veel medewerkers, maar het maakt uitzendkrachten vaak ook extra afhankelijk van de bereidheid en (financiële) mogelijkheden van de werkgevers.

In hoofdstuk 4 zijn we verder ingegaan op deze informele leeractiviteiten. We hebben onderzocht welke verschillende profielen van uitzendkrachten er konden worden onderscheiden met betrekking tot de informele leeractiviteiten en persoonsgebonden factoren die relateren aan dit informele leergedrag. Eerder onderzoek laat zien dat deelname aan informele leeractiviteiten (deels) een gebrek aan formele leeractiviteiten kunnen compenseren omdat het individuen zelf de controle geeft over het leerproces. Deze resultaten hebben we in hoofdstuk 3 ook specifiek voor uitzendkrachten teruggezien. Informeel leren verschilt van persoon tot persoon. Het is afhankelijk van persoonlijke kenmerken en voorkeuren. Om dit persoonlijke karakter in acht te nemen en de heterogeniteit onder uitzendkrachten nader te bestuderen, hebben we geanalyseerd welke profielen uitzendkrachten er konden worden gedestilleerd uit de vragenlijstdata. Specifiek hebben we in deze studie gekeken naar drie cruciale weloverwogen informele leeractiviteiten, te weten reflectie (als zijnde 'individuele' leeractiviteit), vragen naar feedback, en kennisdeling (als zijnde 'sociale' leeractiviteiten). Persoonlijke factoren die erom bekend staan het informele leergedrag van individuen te beïnvloeden en die daarom nu in de context van uitzendkrachten zijn meegenomen, betroffen: self-efficacy, leerdoeloriëntatie, affectieve betrokkenheid, en carrière perspectief.

Latente Klassen Analyse (n=449) liet vijf verschillende profielen zien (zie Figuur 4.1), en deze hebben we als volgt genoemd: (1) de *permanente* uitzendkracht, (2) de *duurzaam inzetbare* uitzendkracht, (3) de *meegaande* uitzendkracht, (4) de *zelfverzekerde* uitzendkracht, en (5) de *weerstand-biedende* uitzendkracht. Hoofdstuk 4 leert ons twee belangrijke lessen. De eerste les is dat deze vijf profielen samen de heterogeniteit onder uitzendkrachten bevestigen, als het gaat om het weloverwogen informele leergedrag en de persoonlijke factoren die daaraan te relateren zijn. Op basis van deze heterogeniteit is het klantorganisaties te adviseren om in beleid ten aanzien van CO ruimte te bieden voor de persoonlijke voorkeuren van informeel leren. Daarnaast is het van belang expliciet aandacht te besteden aan deze persoonlijke voorkeuren in de werkovereenkomst met een uitzendkracht, en ook in het businesscontract met de uitzendorganisatie. Dit betekent dat in beleid

en in de overeenkomsten tussen de partijen voldoende ruimte moet zijn voor uitzendkrachten om op hun eigen manier op zoek te gaan naar leermogelijkheden en dat zij, op individueel niveau gefaciliteerd en begeleid moeten worden in het informele leren. De tweede les is dat de profielen verschillen ten aanzien van 'vragen naar feedback' en 'kennisdeling'. Dit is een interessant gegeven, omdat beide aspecten te kenmerken zijn als sociale informele leeractiviteiten waarvoor een zekere mate van interpersoonlijk vertrouwen en samenwerking is vereist (Ipe, 2003; Levin & Cross, 2004). Bovendien is kennisdeling afhankelijk van de mate waarin individuen een gezamenlijke taal spreken en dezelfde visie hebben (Levin & Cross, 2004; Mooradian, Renzl, & Matzler, 2006). Maar juist deze punten vormen een uitdaging voor uitzendkrachten omdat zij op tijdelijke basis bij een klantorganisatie, binnen een specifiek team, werken.

De profielen verschilden het meest ten aanzien van leerdoeloriëntatie, wat betekent dat uitzendkrachten verschillen in de mate waarin zij 'leren' als primair doel zien binnen hun werk. Dit laat zien dat er nog winst te behalen is voor uitzendkrachten als het gaat om het continu agenderen van persoonlijke groei en duurzame inzetbaarheid.

#### Conclusies

De bevindingen van hoofdstukken 2, 3 en 4 leidden samen tot drie overkoepelende conclusies. Elke conclusie legt een specifiek aspect bloot van de *complexiteit* van de uitzendconstructie met betrekking tot CO. Tegelijkertijd laat elke conclusie ook een aspect van potentie zien om een uitzendconstructie daadwerkelijk als een *triangulaire* arbeidsrelatie te laten functioneren.

Ten eerste laat dit proefschrift zien dat de percepties van uitzendkrachten over (hun betrokkenheid in) uitzendconstructies nog vrij traditioneel zijn. Dit weerhoudt hen ervan om expliciet aandacht te besteden aan CO. Daarnaast bevestigen we het potentieel van CO voor uitzendconstructies. Het aanbieden van mogelijkheden van CO aan uitzendkrachten draagt bij aan de AB naar beide werkgevers. Dus, volgens uitzendkrachten zelf, is CO een instrument dat voordelen biedt omdat het hen helpt meer betrokken te zijn bij de klantorganisatie, en in mindere mate ook bij de uitzendorganisatie. Zodoende draagt CO bij aan een meer hedendaagse benadering van uitzendconstructies.

Ten tweede blijkt uit dit proefschrift dat de diversiteit onder uitzendkrachten groot is, en dat dit een van de redenen is dat het huidige beleid omtrent CO tekort schiet. Het stimuleert uitzendkrachten om deel te nemen aan CO-activiteiten en te werken aan hun ambities, als zij deze mogelijkheden precies kunnen afstemmen op hun individuele wensen. Bovendien is het personaliseren van CO-mogelijkheden nodig om tegemoet te komen aan de diversiteit onder uitzendkrachten. Dit proefschrift laat daarnaast zien dat het personaliseren van specifiek sociale informele leeractiviteiten een extra sleutel tot succes kan zijn.

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Ten derde is op basis van dit proefschrift te stellen dat CO vaak niet wordt gezien als een onderwerp dat moet worden besproken met de drie partijen samen, terwijl door alle partijen de meerwaarde hiervan wordt erkend. Om CO voor uitzendkrachten beter te faciliteren, is het cruciaal om de communicatie tussen de drie partijen – de uitzendkracht, de klantorganisatie en de uitzendorganisatie – te intensiveren.

#### Nieuwe inzichten

Drie inzichten kwamen voort uit de bovengenoemde complexiteiten en deze laten zien hoe de een potentieel voordelige situatie voor de klantorganisatie, de uitzendorganisatie en voor uitzendkrachten zelf, theoretisch kan worden gegrond.

Om de positieve effecten van CO op de AB van uitzendkrachten te bekrachtigen en uitzendkrachten te laten floreren in het werk dat zij doen, is het *ten eerste* van belang dat *de verwachtingen die zij hebben ten aanzien van CO* en *het imago van uitzendconstructies in het algemeen*, serieus worden genomen. Dit geldt voor het bedrijfsleven, maar ook voor het onderzoek naar deze doelgroep. Vervolgstudies zouden kunnen voortborduren op het onderzoek in dit proefschrift door zich nog meer te focussen op de *redenen* van uitzendkrachten om te leren, en op de *interpretaties* van uitzendkrachten ten aanzien van de CO-mogelijkheden binnen de context van hun uitzendconstructie. De *Zelfdeterminatietheorie* zou voor deze focus een passend theoretisch raamwerk kunnen bieden. Deze theorie beschrijft drie psychologische basisbehoeften die essentieel zijn om optimaal te kunnen functioneren: autonomie, competentie en verbondenheid (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Als we deze drie basisbehoeften als startpunt nemen om de verwachtingen van uitzendkrachten ten aanzien van CO-mogelijkheden en hun AB naar beide werkgevers te onderzoeken, dan impliceert dit dat de werkplekken van uitzendkrachten deze basisbehoeften moeten faciliteren. Dit draagt bij aan een vruchtbare leeromgeving, het helpt uitzendkrachten continu hun competenties te ontwikkelen en zodoende te floreren in het werk dat zij doen.

Het idee om te bouwen op de drie psychologische basisbehoeften van een uitzendkracht betekent *niet* dat alle verantwoordelijkheid omtrent CO bij deze uitzendkracht moet liggen. Gegeven de triangulaire arbeidsconstructie kan een uitzendkracht gemakkelijk 'tussen wal en schip' raken als het gaat om het CO-beleid van beide organisaties. Een *tweede inzicht* is zodoende dat het personaliseren van CO-mogelijkheden een specifieke competentie*management* benadering vraagt van zowel de klantorganisatie als de uitzendorganisatie. In deze benadering zou de werkcontext waarin de uitzendkracht zijn/haar competenties ontwikkelt centraal moeten staan. Deze benadering komt overeen met een *situationele* kijk op competentie management (cf. Capaldo, Iandoli, & Zollo, 2006) en is gebaseerd op de overtuiging dat competenties worden beïnvloed door aspecten van de situatie waarin deze competenties in praktijk worden gebracht. Te denken valt aan aspecten als organisatiecultuur, sociale interactie, of de unieke manier waarop individuen

betekenis geven aan hun rol in een organisatie (e.g. Capaldo et al., 2006; Sandberg, 2000;). Paradoxaal genoeg faciliteert een situationele competentiemanagement benadering ook een meer algemene filosofie ten aanzien van 'uitzend-werkplekleren' (cf. Billett, 2002) welke zich focust op de CO van uitzendkrachten over de langere termijn en zodoende verder kijkt dan één tijdelijke opdracht. Deze filosofie plaatst leren en ontwikkelen in perspectief van de gehele carrière van een uitzendkracht, en kijkt binnen elke tijdelijke opdracht naar de mogelijkheden en kansen om te ontwikkelen.

We gaan nog een stap verder door te stellen dat ten derde een fundamentele verandering van het HRD-systeem voor uitzendkrachten is vereist om CO van uitzendkrachten te faciliteren en te stimuleren, en zodoende de communicatie tussen de drie partijen te verbeteren. In plaats van uitzendkrachten te laten meedraaien in de bestaande HRD-systemen binnen klantorganisaties waarbij de uitzendorganisatie vaak nauwelijks wordt betrokken, is een HRD-systeem vereist dat juist de input van beide organisaties en haar interne stakeholders omarmt. Hiermee wordt een HRD-systeem bedoeld waarin het delen en combineren van visies en wensen van beide werkgevers en van de uitzendkracht met betrekking tot CO als uitgangspunt wordt genomen en wordt gezien als onderdeel van de strategie van het inhuren van uitzendkrachten, in plaats van dat dit te zien als een last. Een theorie die dit idee grondt is de leernetwerktheorie (van der Krogt, 1998; Poell, Chivers, van der Krogt, & Wildemeersch, 2000). Deze theorie stelt dat alle stakeholders die betrokken zijn bij CO van uitzendkrachten deel uitmaken van een en hetzelfde leernetwerk. Om dit netwerk te kunnen laten functioneren is het vereist dat alle partijen voortdurend contact met elkaar hebben en afstemming bereiken ten aanzien van CO. Deze theorie laat dus zien dat een triangulaire arbeidsconstructie één gezamenlijk HRD-systeem vereist waarin de mogelijkheden voor CO binnen de klantorganisatie en de uitzendorganisatie continu moeten worden afgestemd met de wensen van een individuele uitzendkracht.

Samen laten deze theoretische inzichten zien dat een cultuuromslag nodig is met betrekking tot het creëren en faciliteren van mogelijkheden voor CO voor uitzendkrachten zodat zij kunnen bouwen aan hun korte- en lange-termijn carrière, en om tegelijkertijd te bouwen aan een vruchtbare triangulaire arbeidsconstructie. Deze cultuuromslag vraagt aanpassing op verschillende aspecten zoals beschreven in de drie theoretische inzichten. Deze inzichten kennen een zekere gelaagdheid: het vraagt een andere kijk op het faciliteren van CO voor uitzendkrachten, een andere kijk op hoe competentiemanagement ingericht kan worden en een andere kijk op het HRD-systeem dat leren moet faciliteren en stroomlijnen. Deze drie inzichten zijn weergegeven in Figuur 5.1.

Het is belangrijk te benadrukken dat de bevindingen van dit proefschrift gedaan zijn in één specifieke context, namelijk die van één en dezelfde uitzendorganisatie. Deze organisatie werkt daarnaast samen met specifiek *non-profit* klantorganisaties. Ondanks het feit dat twee van de drie studies gebaseerd zijn op een grote steekproef van 449 deelnemers, mogen deze resultaten daarom

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niet gegeneraliseerd worden naar uitzendkrachten die werkzaam zijn binnen andere uitzendorganisaties en/of die werken in profit-georiënteerde klantorganisaties.

#### Tot slot

Uitzendkrachten hebben in Nederland een sterke positie in vergelijking met uitzendkrachten in een aantal andere Westerse economieën, omdat de unieke arbeidsconstructie waarin zij werken hier formeel erkend wordt (tekstbox 1.2). Bovendien wordt in Nederland erkend dat zij zich continu professioneel moeten kunnen ontwikkelen (tekstbox 1.3). Toch blijkt in praktijk dat uitzendkrachten nog niet altijd de mogelijkheid voor CO krijgen, zien, of maximaal kunnen benutten. Het creëren van een lange termijn focus voor uitzendkrachten door middel van het faciliteren en organiseren van mogelijkheden voor CO, klinkt als een paradox: CO van uitzendkrachten worden vaak gezien als twee aspecten die moeilijk met elkaar verenigbaar zijn. Desondanks geloof ik, gebaseerd op de bevindingen van dit proefschrift, dat CO van meerwaarde is voor alle partijen die betrokken zijn bij een uitzendconstructie. Een triangulaire arbeidsconstructie vereist investering van alle drie de partijen om daadwerkelijk te kunnen functioneren als een 'driehoek'. Ieder moet inspanningen leveren om dit mogelijk te maken. CO is zowel een middel om continu met elkaar in gesprek te blijven en gezamenlijk te blijven opereren, en een doel op zich, om een situatie te creëren die voor alle partijen voordelig is. Alleen dan kan een uitzendconstructie haar ideaalbeeld benaderen.

#### Dankwoord

Het is zover! Ik mag mijn dankwoord schrijven. Een mijlpaal en een moment waar ik tijden naar uit heb gekeken. Want oh, wat is het belangrijk om de juiste mensen om je heen te hebben als je een promotietraject doet. Laat ik daarmee starten: zonder jullie had ik het Echt Niet Gekund! Ik bedank een aantal mensen in het bijzonder, en ja, daar neem ik graag flink de ruimte voor:

Allereerst gaat mijn grote dank uit naar **de uitzendorganisatie die mogelijk maakte dat dit proefschrift er ligt**. Dank voor jullie toewijding aan de uitzendbranche, en voor jullie interesse in mijn onderzoek. Jullie lieten me zien waar de kansen liggen in de uitzendbranche en na elke sessie bij jullie op kantoor (of aan de lunchtafel), liep ik naar buiten met nieuwe inspiratie.

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Piety, Renate en Martin, dank voor jullie begeleiding de afgelopen jaren. Exact 7 jaar geleden solliciteerde ik op deze promotieplek. Op papier stonden 5 korte bullet points en 2 begeleidende zinnen. Ik vond het moeilijk deze tot een concreet onderzoek te vertalen, maar het lukte en ik ben heel trots. Martin, dank voor je vertrouwen, je kritische blikken op mijn teksten, en je gave om mijn onderzoek altijd weer in een brede maatschappelijke context te plaatsen. Het hield me scherp. Piety, jij hield mijn project overzichtelijk en praktisch. Dat had ik nodig, want zonder jouw input was ik in de details gestrand. Jouw gave een interessante rode draad te herkennen en je kennisbasis in de HRM hielpen me op weg, en ook op de weg. Dank voor je eerlijke en recht door zee feedback, en goede schrijftips. Deze tips geef ik nu door aan mijn eigen studenten! Renate, je was er altijd, en altijd opgewekt, en ook altijd scherp. Je dacht mee over de kleinste dilemma's, maar hield me ook met beide benen op de grond. Bij afwijzingen van journals of congressen ving je me op, en juichte bij successen (publicatie!) het hardste van ons allemaal. Dank dat geen vraag je te gek was, en geen moment om te sparren te veel. Piety en Renate, onder jullie hoede ontwikkelde ik mij van student tot volwassen onderzoeker. Jullie waren een heel fijn dagelijks begeleidingsteam. Het kon flink knetteren tijdens onze overleggen. Want als Renate linksaf wilde, vond Piety rechtsaf logischer of andersom. Dat vond ik soms best lastig. Maar jullie vulden goed aan en jullie (bij vlagen) onenigheid hielp mij mijn eigen visie te vormen. Dank daarvoor. ;-)

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WE DID IT!!

Toen gung ik verder
Gien tied meer veur sneu wark
Toen wol ik van slap en muu
Terug naor klaor en stark
Ik keek achterumme
Naor wat wel goed was gaon
En schreef mij op de muure
Zoda 'k 't elke dag zag staon

Wat niet kan, is nooit gebeurd

(Daniel Lohues, 2013)

D



#### About the author

Nienke was born in Assen (the Netherlands) on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 1987, where she grew up as the oldest one of three sisters. She completed pre-university education at the Dr. Nassau College following subjects related to the 'economy and society' profile added with the Musics subject. She graduated in June 2005 and then moved to Utrecht to follow a bachelor programme Dutch language and culture at Utrecht University, which she did for two years. In summer 2007 she quit this programme as she felt her hart was with education. Nienke started the bachelor programme Educational Sciences at Utrecht University and graduated in 2010 (honours programme completed). From 2010-2012 Nienke followed a two-year research master programme Educational Sciences. This gave her the opportunity to dig into the theories of educational sciences for another two years and to learn even more about this interesting discipline. Her enthusiasm for doing research increased and she got interested for doing a PhD-project afterwards. During her bachelor and master programmes, Nienke was active as a student member of the educational committee and the management team of Educational sciences. She taught several bachelor courses in which she learned that teaching at university is what she wanted to do in her career next to doing research.

Altogether, her interest in professional learning, workplace learning and organizational learning perfectly fitted to the available PhD-position at Wageningen University and Research (WUR) at the Education and Competence chair group (currently: Education and Learning Sciences). She started this PhD project in September 2012 and got the opportunity (and the challenge) to design the research project by herself. During the five years at WUR, Nienke was active as a member of the PhD-committee of ECS, and as the chair of the VOR PhD association (in Dutch: the VOR Promovendi Overleg). Besides, she occasionally taught tutorials to bachelor and master students at the WUR in courses related to career development and planning, HRM and skills education.

In November 2017, Nienke started as a lecturer Educational Sciences at Utrecht University and was involved in both bachelor and master courses related to 'learning in organizations' and 'assessment and evaluation'. Furthermore, she taught career workshops and supervised students doing their master internships, and writing their bachelor- and master theses. In June 2019 Nienke will start as a researcher and lecturer workplace learning and professional skills at the WUR, at the chair group of Education and Learning Sciences. She looks forward to combine her two passions of doing research and teaching about workplace learning. It is the interaction with students that drives her most, and it is her personal mission to prepare students maximally for entering the labour market. In this mission her experiences in the research field of workplace learning and teaching about these topics come together.



# **Publications and presentations**

## Peer reviewed publications

- Bronkhorst, L. H., Koster, B., Meijer, P. C., Woldman, N., & Vermunt, J. D. (2014). Exploring student teachers' resistance to teacher education pedagogies, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 40, 73-82. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2014.02.001
- Woldman, N., Wesselink, R., Runhaar, P., & Mulder, M. (2018). Supporting temporary agency workers' affective commitments. Exploring the role of opportunities for competence development, *Human Resource Development International*, *21*, 254-275. doi: 10.1080/13678868.2017.1416035

#### Manuscripts in preparation

- Woldman, N., Wesselink, R., Runhaar, P., & Mulder, M. Competence development: the cure for temporary agency work constructions?
- Woldman, N., Wesselink, R., Runhaar, P., Boevé, A. J., & Mulder, M. *Profiling temporary agency workers' deliberate informal learning activities and related personal factors.*

## Conferences where the results of this PhD thesis are presented

De Onderwijs Research Dagen (ORD) 2014 in Groningen, and 2016 in Rotterdam Competence 2016 in Wageningen

International Conference on Human Resource Development (UFHRD) 2014 in Edinburgh International Human Resource Management Conference (IHRM) 2016 in Vancouver



# Training and supervision plan

# in the context of the research school



# **Interuniversity Center for Educational Research**

Nienke Woldman Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS) Completed Training and Supervision Plan



Name of the learning activity	Department/Institute	Year	ECTS*
A) Project related competences			
Learning in and for vocations and professions	ICO	2013	3
Competence theory, research and practice	ICO/WASS	2014	3
Master class qualitative research	ICO	2014	3
Summer school in structural equation modelling	UU	2015	1.5
ICO National Fall School	ICO	2013	1
ICO International Fall School	ICO	2014	3
B) General research related competences			
WASS Introduction course	WUR	2012	1
ICO Introductory course	ICO	2013	5
Research methodology: From topic to proposal	WASS	2012	4
Systematic literature reviews for the social sciences	WASS	2013	2
Information literacy including EndNote introduction	WGS	2013	0.6
Mobilising your scientific network	WGS	2013	1
Research data management	WGS	2013	0.4
Techniques for writing and presenting a scientific paper	WGS	2013	1.2
C) Career related competences/personal develop	ment		
Writing the PhD research proposal	WUR	2012-2013	6
PhD committee of chair group ECS	WUR	2012-2014	2
VPO committee (2 years of chairing)	VOR	2013-2016	6
Supervising students in course <i>Human Resource Management</i>	WUR	2013-2014	1
Supervising students in course <i>Career development</i> and planning	WUR	2016	1
Workshops Didactic skills, Intercultural communication	WUR	2013-2014	0.2
Supervising individual trajectories of BSc and master theses	WUR	2013-2017	0.5
Guest lecture, 1 <sup>st</sup> BSc students Educational Sciences	UU	2014	0.5



Total			50.4
'Supporting temporary agency workers' dual commitments: exploring the role of competence development opportunities'	IHRM, Vancouver	2016	1
'Antecedents and outcomes of competence development in organizations: a systematic literature review'	UFHRD, Edinburgh	2014	1
'Supporting temporary agency workers' dual commitments: exploring the role of competence development opportunities'	Competence 2016, Wageningen	2016	0.5
literature review' 'Competentie-ontwikkeling op het werk: Kan dit de betrokkenheid van uitzendkrachten vergroten?'	ORD, Rotterdam	2016	
Onderwijs Research Dagen (ORD)  'Antecedents and outcomes of competence development in organizations: a systematic	ORD, Leiden ORD, Groningen	2015 2014	1

<sup>\*</sup>One credit according to ECTS is on average equivalent to 28 hours of study load



# ICO Dissertation series

#### ICO Dissertation series

In the ICO Dissertation Series dissertations are published of graduate students from faculties and institutes on educational research within the ICO Partner Universities: Eindhoven University of Technology, Leiden University, Maastricht University, Open University of the Netherlands, University of Amsterdam, University of Twente, Utrecht University, VU University Amsterdam, and Wageningen University, and formerly University of Groningen (until 2006), Radboud University Nijmegen (until 2004), and Tilburg University (until 2002). The University of Groningen, University of Antwerp, University of Ghent, and the Erasmus University Rotterdam have been 'ICO 'Network partner' in 2010 and 2011. From 2012 onwards, these ICO Network partners are full ICO partners, and from that period their dissertations will be added to this dissertation series. The list below contains a selection of the list update from January 2019 including the last 50 dissertations (see also http://www.ico-education.nl/research/ico-dissertation-series).

- 353.Baggen, Y. (13-01-2017). LLLIGHT 'in' Europe Lifelong Learning, Innovation, Growth and Human capital Tracks in Europe. Wageningen: Wageningen University.
- 354. Wouters, A. (09-02-2017). Effects of medical school selection. On the motivation of the student population and applicant pool. Amsterdam: VU Medisch Centrum.
- 355.Baas, D.M. (01-05-2017). Assessment for Learning: more than a tool. Maastricht: Maastricht University.
- 356.Pennings, J.M. (04-05-2017). Interpersonal dynamics in teacher-student interactions and relationships. Utrecht: Utrecht University.
- 357.Lans, R.M. (18-05-2017). Teacher evaluation through observation. Groningen: University of Groningen.
- 358.Grohnert, T. (18-05-2017). Judge/Fail/Learn; enabling auditors to make high-quality judgments by designing effective learning environments. Maastricht: Maastricht University.
- 359.Brouwer, J. (22-05-2017). Connecting, interacting and supporting. Social capital, peer network and cognitive perspectives on small group teaching. Groningen: University of Groningen.
- 360. Van Lankveld, T.A.M. (20-06-2017). Strengthening medical teachers' professional identity.
  Understanding identity development and the role of teacher communities and teaching courses.
  Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.
- 361. Janssen, N. (23-06-2017). Supporting teachers' technology integration in lesson plans. Enschede: University of Twente.
- 362. Tuithof, J.I.G.M. (23-06-2017). The characteristics of Dutch experienced history teachers' PCK in the context of a curriculum innovation. Utrecht: Utrecht University.
- 363. Van Waes, S. (23-06-2017). The ties that teach: Teaching networks in higher education. Antwerp: University of Antwerp.
- 364.Evens, M. (30-06-2017). Pedagogical content knowledge of French as a foreign language: Unraveling its development. Leuven: KU Leuven.
- 365. Moses, I. (07-09-2017). Student-teachers' commitment to teaching. Leiden: Leiden University.
- 366. Wansink, B.G.J. (15-09-2017). Between fact and interpretation. Teachers' beliefs and practices in interpretational history teaching. Utrecht: Utrecht University.
- 367.Binkhorst, F. (20-10-2017). Connecting the dots. Supporting the implementation of Teacher Design Teams. Enschede: University of Twente.
- 368. Stoel, G.L. (14-11-2017). Teaching towards historical expertise. Developing students' ability to reason causally in history. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam.
- 369. Van der Veen, M. (28-11-2017). Dialogic classroom talk in early childhood education. Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.
- 370. Frèrejean, J. (08-12-2017). Instruction for information problem solving. Heerlen: Open University of the Netherlands.
- 371.Rezende Da Cunha Junior, F. (19-12-2017). Online groups in secondary education. Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.
- 372.Van Dijk, A.M. (22-12-2017). Learning together in mixed-ability elementary classrooms. Enschede: University of Twente.
- 373.Bouwmans, M.H.C.F. (12-01-2018) The role of VET colleges in stimulating teachers' engagement in team learning. Wageningen: Wageningen University.
- 374. Jansma, D.J. (25-01-2018) This is wrong, right? The role of moral components in anti- and

- 375. Okkinga, M. (02-02-2018) Teaching reading strategies in classrooms- does it work? Enschede: University of Twente.
- 376. Thomsen, M. (09-02-2018) Teachers Trust. Measurement, sources and consequences of teacher's interpersonal trust within schools for vocational education and training. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam.
- 377. Van der Wurff, I.S.M. (09-02-2018) Fatty acids, Cognition, School Performance and Mental Well-Being in Children and Adolescents. Heerlen: Open University of the Netherlands.
- 378. Raaijmakers, S.F. (16-02-2018) Improving self-regulated learning: Effects of training and feedback on self-assessment and task-selection accuracy. Utrecht: Utrecht University.
- 379.Zhao, X. (07-03-2018) Classroom assessment in Chinese primary school mathematics education. Utrecht: Utrecht University.
- 380. Van Rooij, E.C.M. (15-03-2018) Secondary school students' university readiness and their transition to university. Groningen: University of Groningen.
- 381. Vanlommel, K. (26-03-2018) Opening the black box of teacher judgement: the interplay of rational and intuitive processes. Antwerp: University of Antwerp.
- 382.Boevé, A.J. (14-05-2018), Implementing Assessment Innovations in Higher Education. Groningen: University of Groningen.
- 383. Wijsman, L.A. (30-05-2018) Enhancing Performance and Motivation in Lower Secondary Education. Leiden: Leiden University.
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