Social enterprises, a specific managerial model?
Analysis of Human Resource Management and Employment Integration in the quasi-market of “service voucher” in Belgium

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Work in progress

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This paper analyzes the role of the institutional context in shaping managerial policies in the personal services sector in Belgium. More specifically, this paper aims to understand not only the influence of differentiated institutional contexts, as materialized in joint committees and their regulation on human resource practices, but also to interpret the effect that the type of activity developed by the firm can have on human resource management. Accordingly, the objective is to identify the potential links between some managerial models – and particularly the difference between social enterprises and for-profit organizations - and the specific contexts in which the companies operate. We will then see how those policies may have an impact on employment integration, and more precisely for vulnerable workers.

Key words: Human Resource Management, Employment Integration, Neo institutionalism

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1. Introduction

The Belgian “service voucher” scheme is not only representative of postindustrial societies (see Esping-Andersen 1999) but is also a major actor in creating jobs for low qualified workers (home cleaners, housekeepers…). This system, which still continues to expand rapidly, was initially designed in 2001 to foster the creation of regular work for low-skilled persons doing housework and to give vulnerable workers access to employment. With this view, it foresees some particularly striking issues as far as employment integration, also known as job quality, is concerned.

The Belgian “service voucher” scheme is also characterized by the plurality of providers that compete with each other: public, private for profit organizations and social economy not-for-profit organizations (such as work integration enterprises, homecare services agencies).
In this specific context, we aim to understand the role that the institutional context plays in shaping managerial policies, which, in turn, influence the degree of employment integration. This paper ambitions to discuss whether social enterprises show peculiar features in their managerial model when compared to for-profit organizations (FPO) and therefore present a distinctive impact on employment integration of low-skilled workers. More specifically, this paper seeks to analyze the influence of differentiated institutional contexts, as materialized in joint committees and their regulation on human resource management policies.

The second objective of the paper consists in interpreting the effect that the mission of the firm has on human resource management. The literature suggests that nonprofit organizations, when compared to for-profit companies tend to invest more and more in their HR practices (Ridder, McCandless Baluch, Piening, 2011). Is this the case in the ‘service voucher’ sector and, if yes, to what extent?

With this objectives in mind, we draw on a conceptual framework articulating neo institutionalist contributions (Hall and Soskice 2001, DiMaggio and Powell 1983, DiMaggio and Powell 1997) and the social regulation theory (Reynaud, 1988, 1999; De Terssac, 2001). Neo institutionalist theories share a deterministic approach with the idea that the institutional context imposes a set of constraints to organizations, shaping the way managerial decisions are taken. Organizations will tend to develop similar policies and adopt the same behavior when belonging to the same organizational field due to isomorphic pressures (DiMaggio and Powell, 1999). Yet, organizations are not completely bound by the organizational field; neither are they totally free to act (Klarsfeld et al. 2012). Although there is a tendency of organizations to move towards homogenization (DiMaggio and Powell, 1999), this paper sheds light on the contrast and the diversity among human resource management policies displayed by organizations acting in the same sector of activity. Reynaud’s social regulation theory brings an interesting explanation to this phenomenon, emphasizing social actors’ leeway as well as their interplay and interactions.

The paper is organized as follows. The first section presents the theoretical framework built up from neo institutionalist contributions and the social regulation theory. The conceptual inputs underpinning those theories provide a deeper understanding of the relationship developed by the organization with its institutional context and, more explicitly, the effects that the institutional environment can have on human resource management practices. The notion of employment integration is also presented in this section. The second section describes the “service voucher” scheme in Belgium before clarifying its institutional context. The third section exposes the methodology and the preliminary findings of our empirical analysis. This fourth section discusses empirical evidence to attest whether or not social enterprises are
specific, by looking at the weight of the institutional context on employment practices and on job integration.

1.1. Conceptual background

To what extent do ‘service voucher’ activities, created to favor employment integration, actually do so? Do companies operating in this specific regulatory context contribute to employment integration and, if yes, do they all contribute similarly, particularly when some are public while others are private, and some are for-profit companies while others are non-profit operators?

This section presents the analytical framework built up from neo institutionalist contributions and the social regulation theory in order to apprehend and better understand the role that human resource management, developed at company level, plays in the process of employment integration. In this perspective, human resource management is conceptualized as a producer of social norms embedded within a specific institutional context and subject to internal interaction between social actors in the company.

1.2. The role of the institutional context in shaping managerial policies

Companies providing ‘service voucher’ activities act in a common regulatory environment. We use neo institutionalist contributions to conceptualize the influence of the institutional context on the organizations. Organizations are ‘embedded’ within a larger environment that includes social practices, norms, rules and values, commonly named “institutions” by North (1990) or “organizational field” by DiMaggio and Powell (1983, 1991). Once organizations are well established in a specific organizational field, “there is an inexorable push towards homogenization” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983:148). In such a perspective, the norms and values that structure organizational action reflect the norms and values of the organizational field, which comprises groups of organizations and institutions that gather to form a recognized area of institutional life (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

With the “Varieties of Capitalism” (VoC) approach, Hall and Soskice (2001) bring in a new perspective by placing the firm at the center of their analysis. They emphasize the numerous interactions that the firm develops with other actors, such as trade unions, employers, customers, suppliers, etc. Besides, the authors assume that the behavior of economic actors is determined by strategic interactions, which are, in turn, conditioned by some institutions (Hall and Soskice, 2001). As a result, Hall and Soskice outline the institutions which are the most likely to influence the outcome of strategic interactions. They identify five spheres that are crucial to the firm’s capacity to act efficiently: industrial relations, vocational training and education, employees, corporate governance and inter-firms relations. Companies develop relationships with these different spheres in order to solve coordination problems, often considered to be critical for the development
of their key competencies (Hall & Soskice, 2001). The success of the firm largely relies on its capacity to interact and to develop a high quality network with other actors (Hall and Soskice 2001).

Hall and Soskice (2001) stress the bilateral nature of the relationship between the institutional environment and the organization and underscore the impact of this interaction on the managerial choices made by the organization. Managerial choices, and more particularly in this case human resource management policies, result from coordination mechanisms between the organization and its context. Although the “Varieties of Capitalism” approach has been used to apprehend national influences, it provides a useful conceptual framework to understand interactions between firms and their institutional environment. We refer to it here to analyze how the institutional context specific to ‘service voucher’ companies, and particularly joint committees and the mission of the organization, acts in shaping human resource management at company level.

In order to analyse the specificities of this institutional context, we choose to look more closely at two spheres identified by Hall and Soskice (2001): the sphere of industrial relations and the sphere of corporate governance.

Analysing the sphere of industrial relations seems highly relevant. It is essential for the company to maintain a dialogue with employees, trade unions as well as with other employers on varied topics such as wages or working conditions (Hall and Soskice, 2001). In Belgium, human resource management policies are partly determined by collective agreements decided at the interprofessional and sectoral level, as well as by company-level agreements in some cases. Labour law and collective bargaining structure the employment relationship (type of contracts, working time, etc.). As Lallement defines it, the term “industrial relations” refers to “the set of practices and rules that, in a company, a branch, a region, or the whole economy, structure relationships between employees, employers and the State” (Lallement 1996: 3, our translation). In this way, the frame displayed by industrial relations strongly influences human resource management policies.

The sphere of corporate governance is also of great concern since it will induce some specific choices at the managerial level. Corporate governance is defined as “the system by which firms are controlled and operated, the rules and practices that govern the relationship between managers and shareholders, and the overall process by which investment capital is allocated” (Goyer 2006: 399-400). In this paper, we consider the mission of the firm, which is closely linked to the mode of financing. Accordingly, we can assume that human resource management in the company will differ if it is a profit-making, a non-profit, or a public company.
1.3. Diversity across organizations through the ‘Reynaldian’ lens.

The institutional context weighs on organizations and therefore structures the way strategic and managerial choices are made (Hall and Soskice, 2001). Yet, organizations are not entirely constrained by the organizational field in which they operate, and the neo-institutionalist approach does not help to understand what happens within the firm beyond the formal description of managerial policies. There is therefore a need to consider further the strategies developed by the different actors within the organization and how they implement human resource policies in practice.

The ‘Social regulation theory’ initiated by Reynaud (1997, 1989) and developed further by De Terssac (2003) brings an interesting explanation to the variations that may occur across organizations within a similar environment. The social regulation theory ambitions to understand how “rules are created in the organization, as well as the way a social group structures itself and produces social action” (De Terssac, 2003:45, our translation).

Consistent with the strategic analysis developed by Crozier et Friedberg (1977), Reynaud goes further and refers to the autonomy of social actors, also characterized as « actors’ ability to create rules and to consent to them » (De Terssac, 2003:20, our translation). Reynaud seeks to understand the mecanisms which contribute to the creation and the diffusion of the rules in the organization (Amblard et al. 1996, De Terssac 2003).

Reynaud formulates his theory based on the core concepts of « rules » and « regulation ». Rules refer to negotiated constraints defined by social actors (De Terssac, 2003; Reynaud, 1989); rules are seen as guiding principles, a guideline for action (Reynaud 1997: XVI). Reynaud (1999) as well as Havard and Krohmer (2008) emphasize the constraining nature of rules and argue that ‘the rules of the game’ that structure actors behavior do not result from individual preferences nor interests (Reynaud 1999, Havard and Krohmer 2008). Resulting from interactions between social actors, rules can be seen as a social facts, but also as a reality, as it provides a frame for social interactions (Paradeise 2003).

However, rules at play are not stable nor fully constraining for the members of the organization. They are submitted to contradiction, opposition, resistance, ignorance. Considering their relatively instable nature, constantly redefined, transformed by the interplay between social actors, the rules must be apprehended in the process of regulation (Havard et Krohmer, 2008; Reynaud, 1988, 1997). Maggi (2003:306) clarifies this idea by the following statement: « in order to understand an organization, there is no need to look at rules at a certain time, but rather to look at the way they combine, they oppose to each other » (Maggi 2003). The process of regulation allows indeed to understand how rules are created, transformed and being modified as the result of actors’ leeway and interactions.
Reynaud (1988) highlights two sources of regulation within the firm: control regulation and autonomous regulation. Control regulation is related to any production of rules that is designed by a specific group to be applied to others. This type of regulation is commonly diffused by the hierarchy ‘holding power’ and defines norms and rules for the company’s employees (Reynaud, 1988): for instance, directives on work distribution, on production objectives and methods (Cadin et al, 2002:47).

If we look at human resource management, we can then conceptualize human resource policies as rules that take part in control regulation. They indeed define rules for other members in the company: who is allowed in the company or not, what conditions each one should meet to be hired, the price of labor, working time, who can be promoted and at what conditions, what performance criteria are, and so on.

However, each member of the company, no matter his or her hierarchical position, has a certain degree of power (Friedberg, 1993). Groups and individuals who work in the company also produce their own rules relative to how to do work better, how long and how much they should make efforts, and so on. In addition, line managers and workers will adapt the norms coming from the top of the company to their daily tasks and establish new rules in order to organize their work in a way that they consider to be more efficient and desirable. Reynaud calls ‘autonomous regulation’ this creation and interpretation of rules arising among individuals and groups of workers for themselves.

Therefore, within a company, different sources of regulation coexist and regularly challenge one another, resulting from negotiations between actors carrying rules of control and actors producing autonomous rules (Cadin et al. 2002).

In this perspective, human resource management practices are not only embedded within a specific institutional frame made up of wider norms and rules, but are also subject to the interplay between social actors. For instance, management does not inherit passively authoritarian rules (Segrestín 2004) stemming from some system or institution, it reshapes and adapts those rules to his organization. Examining these two sources of regulation, it becomes possible to reconstruct and understand the internal dynamics taking place in a company.

1.4. Employment integration

Exploring the notion of “employment integration” emphasized the difficulty to apprehend such a multidimensional concept. For this research, we focus on the more striking features identified in the literature: autonomy, physical working conditions, wage, type of contract, training and development, social environment, hours of work and intensity, work-family balance, participation (Paugam 2000, Paugam and Zhou 2007, Muñoz de Bustillo et al. 2009).
Based on the whole theoretical framework, the question here is threefold. Firstly, how does the institutional context, approached by two dimensions – joint committee and mission of the organization – influences the rules and norms defined by human resource policies within the organization? Secondly, beyond formal definition by management, how are human resource policies implemented within the company, through the interplay between control regulation – managerial initiative – and autonomous regulation – local practice? Thirdly, how do these processes generate more or less employment integration?

2. The field of “service voucher” activities in Belgium

2.1. The Belgian “service voucher” scheme: an overview

Following public authorities impetus, the ‘service voucher’ scheme was introduced in Belgium in 2001 (Henry et al, 2009), then funded by the federal State and the Regions. The ‘service voucher’ is defined in the applicable legislation law (article 2 of the law 20th of July 2001) in favor of proximity services and employment. It refers to a payment coupon issued by the issuing company (Sodexho), which allows the users, « with the help of the financial aid from the state, in the form of subsidy, to pay for housework services » (Nyssens et al. 2009: 2). Users willing to receive housework help services purchase vouchers at the price of 8.50 €. They will then choose the accredited company which will assign them a worker. Each voucher costs indeed 22.04 € (SPF Emploi). The Federal government contributes and pays the difference in order to cover charges such as wage, supervision, training of workers (Defourny et al. 2010). The system is therefore a specific employment relation in a triangle: one providing company, one worker, and one user for whom the workers will provide housework services. It is in addition largely supported by public funding. Most

No more than three years later, what many authors have called the « second generation » service voucher, has come into use (Henry et al. 2009). Slight changes were made as for example the possibility for private-owned temporary work agencies to be accredited (under certain conditions). But a major change lies in the re-federalization of the system. The Federal State wanted to strive for an economic and employment policy (Henry et al, 2009).

The field of personal services shows a great diversity of providers competing on the quasi-market: a variety of for-profit and not-for-profit providers compete on the market (Defourny et al. 2010). A sharp distinction splits up into for profit organizations (temporary agencies, independents, SME, etc.) on one hand and social economy not-for-profit enterprises on the other hand (such as work integration enterprises, local employment Agencies (A.L.E) and homecare services agencies) (Henry et al. 2009: 83-86). Public organizations also compete on the market (such as ‘CPAS’ or social welfare bodies).
The field of housework services organized under the ‘service voucher system’ raises issues related to job quality. Nonstandard and precarious work contracts, higher flexibility in terms of working time (as for example working weekends or holidays) are of great concern in this field (Henry et al. 2009). In a recent study, Henry, Nassaut et al. (2009) have drawn attention on some considerations mentioned in the law. According to the law of 20 July 2001, its royal decrees, and the relevant collective agreements, the firm commits itself to respect wage and working conditions. For example, the company must offer a permanent contract to workers after a six month period, which is in reality often subject to discussions (Henry et al. 2009). However, these authors accentuate the deregulation brought by this system as far as employment law is concerned. Deregulation takes place for instance in the possibility to receive an unlimited number of successive fixed-term contracts for a six-month period (Defourny et al. 2010, Henry et al. 2009). Some recommendations have been made by social partners in order to improve the voucher scheme (Henry et al. 2009).

Even if today, the growth of the personal services sector has slowed down, it still continues to expand. The service voucher system in Belgium gathers approximately 834,959 users, more than 2700 enterprises and 149,827 workers (IdeaConsult 2012).

2.2. The “service voucher” system and its institutional context

Among the institutional spheres identified by Hall and Soskice (2001), we decide to focus on the sphere of industrial relations and the sphere of corporate governance in order to apprehend the specific field of housework services.

Social dialogue in Belgium occurs at different levels: at national, sectoral, and company level. This research takes a closer interest in negotiations occurring at the sectoral level. Sectoral social dialogue takes place in joint committees that consist of a body of employers’ associations and trade unions (Eurofound). Joint Committees negotiate collective agreements for every sector of activity and cover consultations on wage, working conditions, working time, training, etc. (Arcq et al. 2010). “The personnel, industry or enterprises covered by each Joint Committee are defined by Royal Decree” (Eurofound) and, once the scope is defined, all companies and all workers be they unionized or not are likely to be covered by the decisions made in the committee (Eurofound). The joint committees responsible for the field of housework services are number 318 for home-help services and for elderly persons’ carers, and number 322 for temporary work and proximity services.

As mentioned before, this specific field is characterized by a variety of providers. Work integration social enterprises, homecare agencies, private commercial companies and public companies coexist on the same market and show differences in terms of financing and subvention. This can be linked to the sphere of corporate governance.
3. Methodology

3.1. Hypotheses

Based on the conceptual framework, the empirical part of the research is meant to test four hypotheses.

Firstly, based on the neo-institutionalist approach, we can assume that the ‘service voucher’ companies that operate under a common regulatory background will develop homogenous human resource management policies.

Secondly, if one refers to Hall and Soskice (2001), we assume that homogeneity will however be limited by the fact that the activity depends on two different joint committees and is organized by different types of providers, who can be either public of private owned, and who can be for-profit or not-for profit firms. Accordingly, the second hypothesis assumes that there will be diversity among the firms in the activity according to the joint committee that they belong to and according to the mission of the firm.

Thirdly, following social regulation theory, one can suppose that the implementation of human resource policies within the firm will reduce the degree of heterogeneity, because it will favor a degree of divergence between the formal policy and its transposition into practice.

Fourthly and finally, differentiated institutional and organizational practices will end up into differentiated degrees of employment integration.

3.2. Data collection

The empirical study explored the Belgian “service voucher” system. More precisely, it focused on three types of providers: work integration social enterprises, homecare services agencies, and for-profit organizations. Although public organizations also compete on the quasi-market, they will not be studied in this research as we aim to compare social enterprises to for profit enterprises.
Table 1: Typology of providers in the field of housework services in Belgium

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>For profit organizations</th>
<th>Social enterprises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>Maximizing profit</td>
<td>Work integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providers</td>
<td>Private commercial</td>
<td>Home care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>companies (FPO)</td>
<td>Work integration social enterprises (WISE)</td>
<td>accredited agencies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Typology of providers according to their mission and sector (Defourny et al. 2010: 589)

Data have been collected during a nine-month period from February 2012 to October 2012 by the means of a written questionnaire composed of items proposing Likert-scale format responses, or Yes/No answers. The questionnaire was inspired by the prior European Working Condition Survey (EWCS) and integrated validated scales in social psychology. The EWCS survey started in 1990 and is held every five years in order to obtain information on different aspects of job quality. A recent study on job quality requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (Muñoz de Bustillo et al. 2009) has reviewed all existing indicators and has characterized the EWCS as the richest and most interesting source to make use of. Additionally, several questions were elaborated with the view to capture human resource practices in the organizations. The questionnaire was designed with the view to identify and understand the managerial practices implemented in the organization and to assess the level of employment integration.

The research team chose to use a non-probability sampling design. The field of housework services is not easy to reach because it is geographically dispersed; it changes over time; and it is composed of a large number of small and medium size companies. The sample is thus set on a voluntary basis.

The objective was to obtain a relatively equal number of organizations willing to take part in the survey for each category of organization. The research team intended to work with 15-20 companies for each of the three types of organizations considered and with all of their respective workers. In concrete terms, the questionnaire was administered to 627 workers and 47 employer representatives split between 47 selected organizations in the Walloon Region and Brussels Region (see table below).
Table 2 - Survey: Sample of organizations and workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>For profit organizations</th>
<th>Work integration organizations</th>
<th>Homecare services agencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizations</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer representatives interviewed</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers interviewed</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two comments can be made related to data collection. The first one relates to the small number of homecare services agencies in the sector. In this regard, all agencies (less than 20) were contacted and 11 agencies took part in the survey. The second comment refers to for-profit organizations. This category is usually divided into private commercial enterprises on one hand and temporary agencies on the other hand. However, for this research, we only questioned private commercial enterprises as none temporary agencies agreed to participate.

In each organization, we started by interviewing the human resource director or the director, before submitting a questionnaire to several workers. Most of the time, the questionnaire was administered to workers during collective sessions. In some specific cases, questionnaires were completed individually but still at the workplace and in the presence of a researcher. The survey addressed mostly low qualified workers, what implied the necessary presence of the researcher in order to answer potential questions and help respondents to fill out completely the questionnaire.

3.3. Data analysis

To identify the impact of the institutional context on human resource management practices and highlight the potential differences between social enterprises and for profit organizations, we followed two steps. Multiple factor analysis was first used (step 1). Exploratory analyses were then made by the means of descriptive statistics (step 2). Further statistical analysis will be conducted in future steps of the research.

This analysis focused on four different HR practices that were identified as to be highly relevant for the object of research: training and development, evaluation, health and safety, and participation. Each of the four human resource areas was described in the database by quantitative variables. Step 1 consisted in describing the main dimensions summed up behind each set of variables. We calculated the correlation coefficient
between the variables and the dimension. Then, we isolated the most salient dimensions crosswise the four HR areas.

Step 2 consisted of analyzing, in the first place, the impact of joint committees and, in the second place, the effect of the type of organization on human resource practices by the means of descriptive statistics.

4. Preliminary findings

Data collected are still under analysis. This section presents firstly the different dimensions identified crosswise the different HR areas. Secondly, some preliminary results will be presented questioning the degree of homogeneity and conversely the degree of variability of human resource policies among companies in the sector according to their respective joint committee and to their mission.

4.1. Findings from step 1:

The first human resource policy area investigated was health and security. One main dimension explaining 65% of the total variance refers to the presence of a health and security policy in the organization (information on risks and equipment). Questions related to workers the second human resource area, performance appraisal, were grouped into 7 factors. The focus remains on the two first factors, which are the most significant. The first dimension (30% of the variance) indicates the presence of formal evaluation in the organization, with the idea of supervision and support, whereas dimension 2 refers to discussions on the existing situation and needs (training, career paths …).

We also focused on variables providing information on the third area, training and development. These variables were broken down several factors. One main factor stands out and communicates on the presence of training and development activities in the company, what we could call « basic » training activities. Another dimension, although less significant, can be highlighted and refers to training activities that take place outside working hours and that are not directly linked to work (as for example, ethics, communication skills, language courses, etc.).

The last HR area studied in this research is participation. The first dimension indicates the possibility or not for workers to give their opinion and participate in negotiation within the company. The second dimension relates to the nature of participation, such as formal participation or participation through informal channels.

A first observation can be made when compiling the different set of variables. Three human resource areas, training and development, health and security as well as participation appear to be tightly linked. If a company develops one of the aforementioned policies, it will likewise invest in the remaining policies. The performance appraisal policy seems on the contrary to be independent.
4.2. Findings from step 2: variability of human resource policies between companies.

Do joint committees and the mission of the organization favor differentiated human resource policies within the organization? From the neo-institutionalist approach, we supposed that the ‘service voucher’ companies that operate under a common regulatory background would develop homogenous human resource management policies. In addition, the second hypothesis assumed that there would be diversity among the firms according to the joint committee that they belong to and according to the mission of the firm.

The first results highlight some differences between the two joint committees of the sector but not for all HR practices. Differences can be noticed for health and safety, training and development policies. More specifically, the results suggest a higher development of training activities not related to work in joint committee n° 318. Performance appraisal is quite similar in both joint committees.

Nevertheless, it is essential to remain cautious with regard to this first interpretation. Looking at the mission of the organization seems therefore interesting to better understand the differences between companies. Joint committee n° 318 covers homecare services agencies, whereas n° 322 includes profit enterprises and work integration social enterprises. This leads to some clarification of findings. The first findings indicate higher investment of work integration social enterprises and homecare services agencies in terms of human resource management policies. By contrast, for profit organizations do not invest as much as the other providers in participation and in health and safety. There is important discrepancy in the area of training and development, with for profit organizations showing the lowest results.

Yet, primary observations also attest the presence of some variations occurring within similar institutional context. It is therefore important to consider the weight of the management of organizations in shaping managerial policies.

5. Conclusion

Referring to the results presented in this paper, preliminary findings indicate that the institutional context of the firms has an impact on the human resource policies developed by the firm. Indeed, preliminary findings show that human resource policies vary when considering the joint committees and the type of organization. However, they also show that one needs to integrate the perspective of the mission of the firm in order to clarify the first results observed, because the joint committee n° 322 covers two types of providers – for profit organizations and work integration social enterprises. The preliminary findings indicate that for profit organizations have less developed human resource management policies.

Nevertheless, the results suggest that, although there is an influence of the context, some variations occur among organizations within a same institutional context, in this case, within a specific joint committee and a particular type of provider. Various extreme cases
have been underlined, which attests certain variations among human resource management practices. The social regulation theory brings in this sense a complementary interpretation of the results based on actors’ interplay and interactions within the firm. Those first results clarify the influence of the institutional context on human resource practices. As this research explores the question of employment integration, further analysis is needed in order to understand this time the relationship between HR practices and the level of employment integration perceived by workers. The preliminary findings of this research have highlighted a substantial link between human resource policies and employment integration. Investigating the data through descriptive statistical analyses, further analysis of the data will test whether the more organizations invest in their human resource management structure, the higher the level of employment integration is.

With the results collected, we are able to identify some interesting organizations, cases that we will investigate with observations techniques and in-depth interviews with different members of the company.
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