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The quality of higher education and research is strongly connected to the quality of the people working in the academic sector. For excellent science, excellent scientists are needed. The pool of competent scholars with academic career ambitions has been growing for the past decades. As public funding of universities has not matched this rise of (potential) staff, academics have become more dependent on competitive external project funding and individual funding. Publishing and grant proposal writing are two activities of major importance for especially early career researcher who aim to advance in academia. Funding organizations therefore play a crucial role in the development of academic careers, next to universities that increasingly focus on attracting and retaining academic top talent. The research questions of this study, 'What is academic talent and how is it selected?' aim to create a better understanding of the process of talent selection within academia, especially in the context of grant allocation.

Key results of this study address the criteria used in talent assessment and more specifically the weight assigned to publications; the social and competitive nature of grant allocation processes; the role of gender in talent selection and gender differences in academic performance; and factors supporting or impeding academic careers.

This study feeds current debates on scientific quality and the growing competition for funding and academic positions with empirical arguments. It reflects on the existing mechanisms of talent selection and ends with a discussion on the implications for higher education and science policy to uphold and stimulate academic talent.

TALENT PROOF: SELECTION PROCESSES IN RESEARCH FUNDING AND CAREERS

PLEUN VAN ARENSBERGEN

Dissertation

Talent Proof Selection Processes in Research Funding and Careers

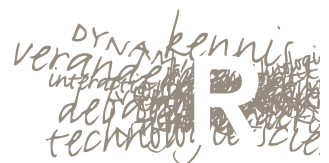
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Rathenau Instituut



The **Rathenau Institute** promotes the formation of political and public opinion on science and technology. To this end, the Institute studies the organization and development of science systems, publishes about social impact of new technologies, and organizes debates on issues and dilemmas in science and technology.

Who was Rathenau?

The Rathenau Instituut is named after Professor G.W. Rathenau (1911-1989), who was successively professor of experimental physics at the University of Amsterdam, director of the Philips Physics Laboratory in Eindhoven, and a member of the Scientific Advisory Council on Government Policy. He achieved national fame as chairman of the commission formed in 1978 to investigate the societal implications of micro-electronics. One of the commission's recommendations was that there should be ongoing and systematic monitoring of the societal significance of all technological advances. Rathenau's activities led to the foundation of the Netherlands Organization for Technology Assessment (NOTA) in 1986. On 2 June 1994, this organization was renamed 'the Rathenau Instituut'.