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Recruitments in Finnish universities: practicing strategic or pathetic HRM?

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Recruitment is a core instrument in the academic labour market. This article takes the perspective of the organisation – here, the university – on recruitment. Universities' personnel policies and practises are shifting from legally oriented personnel administration to more strategic human resource management (HRM). In Nordic countries, this shift is partly driven by the changing status of higher education institutions from state-governed bureaus to more autonomous institutions. This article provides insight into this transition, using Finland as a case example of higher education systems that have undergone drastic reform, moving from a civil servant model to autonomous personnel policy. Data were collected in 2015 for the Evaluation of the Four-Stage Career Model in Finnish Universities project. Based on the analysis of the evaluation data, it can be concluded that, despite the legal reform, old practices continue to matter in the personnel policies and management of universities. Permanent positions (formerly public posts) and the funding sources for academic work still define the nature of the HRM practices aimed towards individuals in the new universities. Some groups might call these HRM practices *strategic*, while for others, the better word would be *pathetic*.

Keywords: *Academic staff*; *managerialism*; *higher education institutions*; *recruiting academics*; *university strategy*

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Recruitment processes are a key dimension of the academic labour market. Academic recruitment is important not only as it organises academic inflow but also lays the ground for the career structure in higher education and links the academic labour market to the wider context of national economies. To study academic recruitment, the perspectives and roles of many actors (e.g. public authorities, higher education institutions, disciplinary communities and individual academics) are often considered in the broader context of national and international labour markets (Fumasoli & Goastellec, 2015).

In contrast to many other professions, the standard academic recruitment process, especially for permanent professorial positions, is often long, includes several phases and is influenced by many actors and features. Differences in national traditions and specialities further increase the complexity, making it challenging to compare academic recruitment between countries (cf. Musselin, 2010). University recruitment processes can be described as two dimensional, including both informal and formal modes of recruitment (Fumasoli & Goastellec, 2015). Depending on the institutional context and the open position, either official procedures or unofficial practises and traditions can dominate or direct the recruitment process. Välimaa (2005) has conceptualised the two dimensions of academic recruitment in the context of Finnish universities. According to Välimaa (2005), in the early stages of an academic career (e.g. doctoral students and project researchers), recruitment is handled primarily by professors, and new recruits are often identified and found through the help of existing academic networks. Project researchers (representing approx. half of the academic staff) typically are recruited through informal modes and offered short-term contracts (typically from 6 to 24 months). In contrast, recruitment in higher career stages takes place through more formal processes: announcing calls for open positions, reviewing applications and interviewing the best candidates from the larger pool of applicants. As well, recruitment decisions are made by collective decision-making bodies, not individual professors (Välimaa, 2005; see also Kuoppala, Pekkola, Kivistö, Siekkinen, & Hölttä, 2015; Välimaa et al., 2016). The most important condition leading to formal or information procedures identified by Välimaa (2005) is the type of position (fixed-term/permanent).

Many European countries have revised the legal frameworks regulating academic employment, which has influenced academic recruitment procedures. In many countries, the status of academic staff members has been changed from civil servants regulated by public law to

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(private) employment relationships. At the same time, universities have introduced regulations permitting taking continuous, fixed-term contracts (Fumasoli & Goastellec, 2015). In addition, the career structures in universities across Europe have been harmonised with the aim to clarify the academic career path and increase mobility in the European Research Area. Accordingly, academic institutions and public funding agencies in most European countries have adopted and supported the four-stage career structure: doctoral training (stage 1), postdoctoral work (stage 2), independent researcher (stage 3) and established researchers (stage 4), including professors, research professors, directors and senior scientists. The European Science Foundation (2009) has also recommended that European universities adopt the four-stage career model.

The Finnish university system has undergone a recent series of reforms very much in line with these broader international trends. Most notable has been the revision of national legislation, particularly the 2010 Universities Act. Organisationally, Finnish universities were an organic part of the overall government body until the enactment of the Universities Act, which changed the status of university employees from civil servants to private employees (Välimaa, 2011). The four-stage career model has been endorsed by the Finnish Ministry of Education (MoE, 2008) and subsequently adopted by Finnish universities. Along with the four-stage career model, Finnish universities have introduced the tenure-track models, again following wider European trends (see, e.g., Brechelmacher, Park, Ates, & Campbell, 2015). There are many variations of the tenure-track model, but they share a basic idea: an individual researcher is promised opportunities to proceed into the final career stage — professorship — given that periodic performance reviews warrant it. With the tenure-track model, Finnish universities have aimed to attract international researchers and profile the universities. However, at the moment, tenure-track recruitment does not play a major role in academic recruitment in Finland, although the number of tenure-track positions has been increasing (Pietilä, 2015; Välimaa et al., 2016).

In this article, we focus on academic recruitment in Finnish universities from the organisational perspective. The aim is to determine whether recruitment practices still follow the previously described dual structure of informal and formal recruitments. As well, we examine whether the new legal status of universities and recently introduced managerial practices (such as strategic human resource management) have changed the structure and practices and promoted a more holistic approach towards human resources (HR) in Finnish higher education institutions. In doing so, we draw on insights from recent studies on the application of recruitment practices at different career stages to better understand their emergence in Finnish universities (see Kuoppala et al., 2015; Välimaa et al.,

2016). As well, we employ empirical survey data collected for the Evaluation of the Four-Stage Career Model in Finnish Universities project commissioned by the Finnish Ministry of Culture and Education (MoEC) in 2015.

This article is structured as follows. First, we explore staff positions at universities and whether they are considered to be strategic resources for universities. Then, we describe the trends and context in which human resource management (HRM) has developed in Finnish universities and in what ways it has developed. Next, we examine the strategic HRM and recruitment practices at Finnish universities. Lastly, we discuss the implications of the findings and conclude with observations regarding whether university recruitment practices and staff follow the basic principles of holistic strategic HRM or whether the assumption of the two dimensions of academic recruitment remains valid.

Staff as a strategic resource in universities

European universities' decision-making and governance systems have been the subject of numerous reforms. Managerialism, in particular, has become a dominant discourse and practice in contemporary universities as business management techniques, such as strategic management, have adopted in a shift from collective decision-making to more individualised forms of leadership (Hyde, Clark, & Drennan, 2013; Mora, 2001; Välimaa, 2011). The managerial techniques used by universities have often created internal tensions due to differences with the self-understanding of the institutions. As Mora (2001) explains, there is a general agreement in higher education that management techniques should be used more, but there is also a consensus that universities should not be governed like private enterprises. Mora stresses that universities should not be pushed beyond their 'natural limits' (2001, p. 107) and that universities have various organisational features which large-scale governance reforms should take into account. One such special feature is the presence of multiple — and sometimes conflicting — goals and interests (e.g. Mora, 2001; Patterson, 2001).

Strategic management has created the need to think of staff as strategic assets. This is hardly surprising as in general, human talent can be considered to be among the most important prerequisites for organisational success. To maintain competitiveness in a knowledge-based economy, organisations have to seek, attract and recruit talented people (Tung, 2008). An increased emphasis on strategic HRM in universities has become a reality. According to Shah (2013), strategic planning is important to all higher education institutions, especially amid the current unstable economic landscape of reduced public funding and a rapidly changing external operating environment.

Although strategic HRM, a familiar management style in private enterprises, has not yet fully penetrated the

governance of universities, university staff are increasingly seen as strategic resources. This development is unsurprising as the role of staff in universities is especially important, connected to all the central activities of a university: teaching, research and service (Baruch, 2013; Kogan, Moses, & El-Khawas, 1994). The key value of academic professionals is that they possess special skills and knowledge that are necessary preconditions for creating and transmitting new knowledge (Mora, 2001; Rasmussen, 2015). Therefore, strategic thinking whenever it deals directly with university staff should first consider what the main purpose of the institution is and, based on that purpose, what kind of people should work for it (Baruch, 2013). Tenure-track professors are regarded especially key strategic resources as they are also a means of strategic positioning in universities (Pietilä, 2015). Project researchers with short, fixed-term contracts are seen as a more peripheral workforce than staff in higher career stages, who usually have permanent or longer fixed-term contracts and are more responsible for putting strategy into practice (see e.g. Brechelmacher et al., 2015; Välimaa, 2005; Välimaa et al., 2016).

Contextual background of HRM at Finnish universities

Through the 1950s, Finnish universities were mostly elite institutions (see Trow, 1973). In the early 1960s, the university system entered the period of massification as new regional universities were established to fulfil the aims of regional policy and social and geographical equality. In the late 1980s, universities' shifted their attention to science and technology policies and eventually to knowledge-based economies and competitiveness (e.g. Hakala, 2009; Heiskala, 2011; Kivinen, Rinne, & Ketonen, 1993; Tirronen, 2007). In the late 1990s, this approach began to focus more on a managerial-professional model with performance-based funding. These changes were all related to a broader, more general shift in state administration from regulative steering to more performance-based steering policy in line with the ideals of new public management (NPM) (Lehtinen, Kuoppala, & Pekkola, 2013; cf. Ojala, 2003). NPM is a new-managerialistic trend, which aims to raise the level of effectiveness in public sector services (Evetts, 2009; Parsons, 1995).

These changes had enormous impacts on universities' recruitment practices. Even in the early 1990s, university personnel policy was based merely on vacancies set by the Finnish Parliament based on proposals from the Finnish Ministry of Education. In 1993, universities (along with other 'performance units' within state administrative bodies) gained the right to make their own decisions to establish, change and close vacancies within their budget framework. It should be mentioned that professors were appointed by the president of the Republic of Finland until 1998 and that the qualifications for these positions were

regulated by legislation, first in the statutes for each university and later in the common statute for all universities. Universities' authority to decide their own HR, however, was expanded in the 1990s and early 2000s as personnel policy was gradually removed from state authority (Lehtinen, Kuoppala, & Pekkola, 2015; Pekkola, 2014).

In 2010, the Universities Act came into effect, changing the legal status of universities and granting them a higher level of financial autonomy. Formerly, public positions were transferred to the domain of private employment contracts, and consequently, universities became independent employers in judicial terms (Välimaa, 2011). The only soft-law policy instrument that still has direct effects on universities' personnel policies is the four-stage career model, which provides guidelines for categorising academic positions and titles (MoE, 2008; Pekkola, 2014; Välimaa et al., 2016). Another guiding principle grounded in Nordic labour market tradition is a collective employment agreement in which all Finnish universities, except Aalto University, have agreed to participate.

HRM and current policy reforms

HRM is the most widely recognised term referring to the management of people in organisations and encompasses all management-related activities regarding work and people in formal organisations (Boxall & Purcell, 2008) In the public sector, the managerial technique of HRM can be linked to NPM. NPM can be considered to be a business-based managerial practice applied in public organisations to increase their efficiency and ensure the effective implementation of public policies (Evetts, 2009; Parsons, 1995). Strategic HRM, whose aim is to integrate HRM with organisational strategies, is a new phenomenon in Finland as it requires at least partial independence from the government and autonomous decision-making powers in staff issues, as well as established HR practices aimed at increasing work performance and efficiency. As Järvalt (2012) observes:

> The use of strategic HRM in the public service is related to changes in the administrative systems on a larger scale. . . . The emergence of HRM as a specific label in the public service coincided with the rise of New Public Management (NPM) in the 1980s. NPM has been characterised by the considerable decentralisation of public-service management, emphasising administrative efficiency and flexibility. (p. 6)

Järvalt (2012, p. 7) compares the basic assumptions of HRM and NPM (see Table 1). Although somewhat simplistic, this comparison provides a good starting point for analysing HRM in Finnish universities as the links between HRM and NPM are, in many respects, quite obvious. Within the context of administrative reforms, the resource dimension of HRM often takes precedence over the human dimension. The classical distinction between

Table 1. New public management and human resource management.

Area	Elements in new public management	Elements in human resource management	Implications for the Finnish university setting
External environment	– Driven by external pressure, changing environment and neoliberal ideas – Market orientation, competition in the provision of public services – Stakeholder (e.g. customer) orientation – Focus on organisational efficiency, effectiveness and productivity – Emphasis on cost reduction, outsourcing and privatisation	– Driven by external pressure, changing environments and neoliberal ideas – Market and customer orientation – Individualist, flexible and competitive notion of employment relationship – Focus on HR advantages; consequently, integration of HRM with organisational strategy	– Close connection of HRM practices and recruitment to external funding sources – Increasing responsiveness of support services to the research grant market – Researchers as individual entrepreneurs with fixed-term contracts – Push from the MoEC to integrate HRM practices and organisational strategy
Organisational structures and processes	– Decentralisation, de-bureaucratisation, agencification and flexibility of structures – Devolution of responsibility – Emphasis shifted from input and process to output and outcome	– Organisational flexibility – Decentralisation, flat structures – Devolution of responsibility for HR	– High number of fixed-term contracts – Research work force primarily coordinated in research groups – New HR departments in central administration (opposed to development)
Performance management and measurement system	– Performance-driven, productivity- and efficiency-enhancing measures – Systematic assessment of performance through targets, standards, indicators, measurement and control systems	– Emphasis on employees' contribution to the bottom line, productivity- and commitment-enhancing measures – Systematic performance assessment	– Performance-based funding for universities – Performance-based salary system – Performance evaluation and output measurements for academic work – Increasing performance evaluation in the new career models, especially in tenure tracks; promotion based on performance
Role of management and managers	– Emphasis on letting the managers manage, managerial discretion and accountability – Primacy of the management function	– Overall integration of HRM into line management – Emphasis on the role of top management and its strategic partnership with HR professionals	– Electronic systems used for working time allocation, work planning, development discussions and salary negotiations with line managers – Inclusion of HR managers in rectors' management group
Employees and organisational culture	– Employee empowerment, emphasis on business-like attitudes of public servants – Focus on leadership	– Importance of building employee trust, common values and commitment to jobs and the organisation – Focus on leadership	– Increasing competition – Entrepreneurial ethos

Adapted from Järvalt (2012, p. 7).

hard and soft HRM (Guest, 1987; Storey, 1992) describes this duality in HRM practices. The connections between administrative reforms and HRM are shown in Table 1. The implications for Finnish universities are presented in the right-most column.

The changing policy context, especially since the introduction of performance-based steering (*tulosohjaus*), the Finnish version of NPM, has also influenced the personnel policy structures and processes of Finnish universities. Traditional, central-government-driven, normative personnel administration has developed into a corporatist personnel policy involving labour market participation and internal, tripartite university politics. This transformation has led to the university management of HR and, since the enactment of the Universities Act, strategic HRM closely connected to the state performance-based steering system (Lehtinen et al., 2015).

Strategic HRM and higher education recruitment

Recent years have seen a growth in institutional autonomy throughout Europe, with universities gaining greater responsibility for managing their own staff. This change is in line with broader developments as universities have gradually become more goal-oriented, accountable organisational actors with a unified mission and strategy characterised by stronger central coordination and control (Pietilä, 2015). Slowly but steadily, European universities are ending the traditional practice of giving much of the actual leadership to the collegial professorial body and instead favouring institutional management (Kogan et al., 1994).

These developments have led to judicial and practical expectations that universities will act as real employers, in the sense that they have comprehensive strategies or processes in place for managing their HR. By definition, HRM in universities encompasses all the administrative and coordinative tasks related to personnel planning, as well as recruitment processes, performance reviews, compensation and salary schemes, staff retention policies (i.e. maintaining motivation and job satisfaction) and the development of HR (e.g. staff training) (Pellert, 2007).

In many cases, however, this transition has not yet resulted in comprehensive changes to HRM practices and processes. Universities are often still constrained by their traditional organisational characteristics and function as fragmented, loosely coupled organisations (Pekkola & Kivistö, 2016; Weick, 1976). Much of this loose coupling arises from the central influence of academic disciplines on the organisational dynamics of universities. Disciplines have differing cultures, values and means of collegial recognition, which all have implications for various dimensions of HRM (see Becher & Trowler, 2001). The full development of HR strategies appears to be a difficult task for universities, which are, by nature, made of a traditionally decentralised staff of specialised experts who have resource policies oriented towards their specific disciplines and logics, not towards the whole university and its overall goals, strategies and profile (Clark, 1983; Pellert, 2007).

As Pellert (2007, p. 109) eloquently concludes, a university, as an institution, is 'characterised by its status as a subordinate entity with little or no authority to shape its own culture ... [which] is now required to manage its human resources instead of simply administering its staff'. This situation presents an urgent need for universities and their HRM departments to ensure that comprehensive staffing policies are consistently and explicitly linked to institutional and performance-unit-level strategies. Recruitment processes, in particular, can be considered to be the key instruments which universities can use strategically to set the future direction of their research and teaching profiles and productivity (Pietilä, 2015).

Data and analysis methods

The data analysed in this article were gathered from a survey sent to the deans and heads of the administration of faculties and to personnel managers and administrators responsible for personnel in the central administration of Finnish universities. The survey was administered during the summer of 2015 as part of the Evaluation of the Finnish Four-Stage Career Model project. The survey was accompanied with a reference letter from the Ministry of Education and Culture, which partly explains the high response rate of 77% ($N = 131$) (see Table 2). The survey questions were related to universities' strategic HRM, four-stage career model, recruitment and tenure-track model.

Table 2. Survey respondents.

	N	%
Area of position		
Natural sciences	17	13
Technology	16	12
Medicine and health sciences	19	15
Agriculture and forestry	2	2
Social sciences	47	36
Humanities	14	11
Other	3	2
University administration	13	10
Position title		
Dean/other academic leader	47	36
Personnel manager	9	7
Chief administrator	9	7
Head of administration	58	44
Other	3	2
Total	131	100

The data were analysed descriptively to gain insight into the respondents' perceptions of the recruitment practices in their units. Data from two questions on the specific responsibility of defining job descriptions and the roles and responsibilities in selection procedures in different career stages were collected only from the respondents who were the heads of administration in a faculty (or an equivalent unit) ($n = 58$).

Findings

Strategicness of human resource policies

According to the survey respondents, Finnish universities' recruitment processes appeared to be very positive and streamlined (see Figure 1). Universities' personnel policy was perceived as supporting the goals set in universities' strategy (73% of respondents completely or partially agreed), and most performance units took these goals into consideration in their personnel selection procedures (85% of respondents completely or partially agreed). Almost all the respondents (93%) completely or partially agreed with the claim that their units had a personnel plan, and the vast majority indicated that the personnel plan was consistently followed (86% of respondents completely or partially agreed). Recruitment in respondents' units was mostly international in reach (77% of respondents completely or partially agreed), and national in reach for only 33% of the respondents. At the unit level, recruitment practices were seen as a means for controlling the university's public image (86% of respondents completely or partially agreed), while most respondents (94%) completely or partially agreed with the claim that the selection criteria were well informed and related to the job descriptions. Two-thirds of the respondents (67%)

partially or completely agreed with the claim that, in their universities, recruitment practices were applied consistently across all academic disciplines (Figure 1).

The survey responses suggest that university strategies have successfully steered the personnel policies and recruitment practices of universities and performance units. Also, according to the data, recruitment practices were viewed as a means to control universities' public image. The respondents reported that nearly all the units had a personnel plan which was followed at the performance-unit level.

However, some respondents described the university recruitment practices as inconsistent for all academics. As well, more than 33% of the respondents thought that recruitments were nationally oriented. These results could indicate contradictions between recruitment practices and Finnish university strategies, which emphasises the importance of internationality in university recruitment. However, both results could also be explained by the application of different recruitment practices (informal and formal) at different career stages. As well, recruitment practices could also vary considerably within staff groups. The standardisation of recruitment strategies and practices is a new effort in Finnish universities, and various practices persist even within a single one unit (Välimaa et al., 2016). Overall, according to middle managers and administrators, the strategic discourse in the context of recruitment seems to be widely accepted in Finnish universities.

Recruitment and stratification of academic workforce

The survey was intended to identify the primary influence on defining job descriptions and the positions in charge
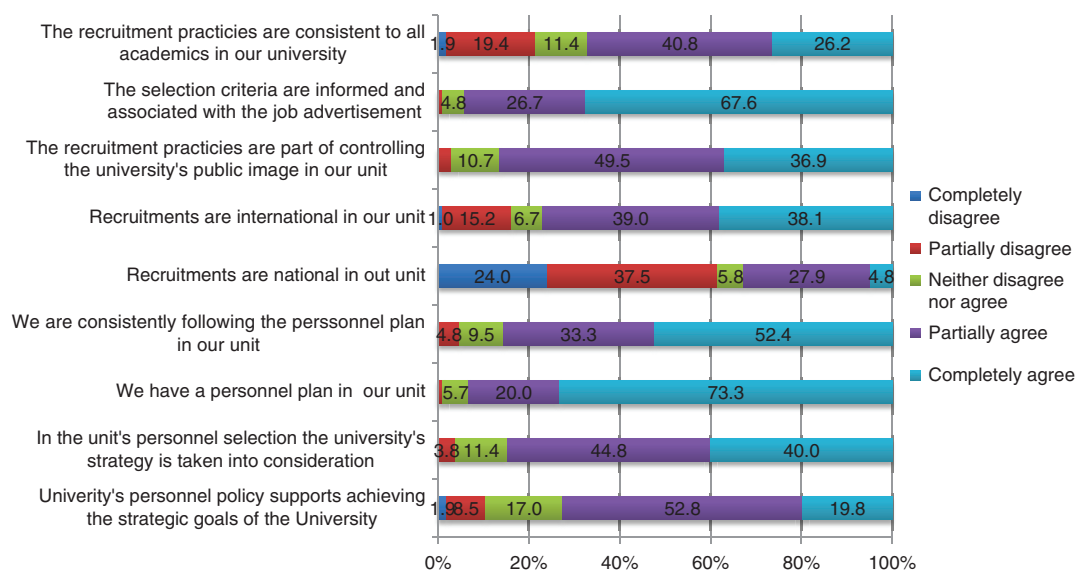

Fig. 1. Recruitment claims by percentage of respondents.

of making the final selections in the recruitment processes in the respondents' performance units. The positions in charge included deans, professors, research team leaders, heads of departments, faculty and departmental administration, recruitment committees, external reviewers, rectors and collective bodies at the departmental level (department councils) and the faculty level (faculty councils).

The positions and bodies with the primary influence on defining job descriptions are shown in Figure 2. In the recruitment processes for earlier career stages, the authority of professors and research team leaders was perceived to be significant, especially when determining the job requirements of project researchers. When the job descriptions of postdoctoral researchers, lecturers and senior researchers were defined, the authority of the head of department and the department council and the recruitment committee increased. In the recruitment of professors and the invitation procedures (a specific person is appointed to a position without an open call) and tenure track candidates, the authority of the head of department and the recruitment committee were dominant (Figure 2).

Figure 2 reveals some patterns in job descriptions. For instance, project researchers' job descriptions were decided by professors or other research team leaders, but these individuals' role decreased when defining doctoral students' and postdoctoral researchers' job descriptions. For the positions of lecturers and senior researcher whose work was more closely bound to the mission of and work conducted by faculties (teaching with wider course and program responsibilities, research activities and possible project responsibilities), decisions on job descriptions were usually made by the heads of departments. In the case of the most important and prestigious positions

(tenure-track positions and professorships), recruitment committees were perceived to have the most significant authority in defining job descriptions.

Recruitment decisions in early career stages, most often for project researchers and doctoral students, were mostly influenced by deans and heads of departments (Figure 3). In the case of lecturers and senior researchers, the situation was almost the same, but in some institutions, faculty councils and rectors might play a role and have the primary influence in decision-making. The picture changed radically when exploring recruitment practices concerning professors, invitation procedures and tenure-track candidates. In those groups, recruitment committees and external reviewers held the most significant authority (Figure 3).

In actual recruitment decisions in middle and lower career stages, the authority remained in the hands of line managers. The authority of the professor or research team leader did not seem to be influential even in recruiting decisions regarding early career stages. Deans' authority, however, was again significant. Surprisingly, the authority when recruiting the postdoctoral researchers postdoctoral researchers, lecturers and senior researchers did not differ much in the recruitment decisions for doctoral students and project researchers. The only major difference in senior researcher and lecturer recruitment decisions was rectors' higher level of influence. Recruitment committees and external reviewers also had considerable significance in the recruitment decisions for professors and tenure-track candidates. Recruitment committees also held an authoritative position when the invitation procedure was used in recruitment. However, selection of professors by invitation was quite rare, used in only 10 − 15% of cases (Välimaa et al., 2016).
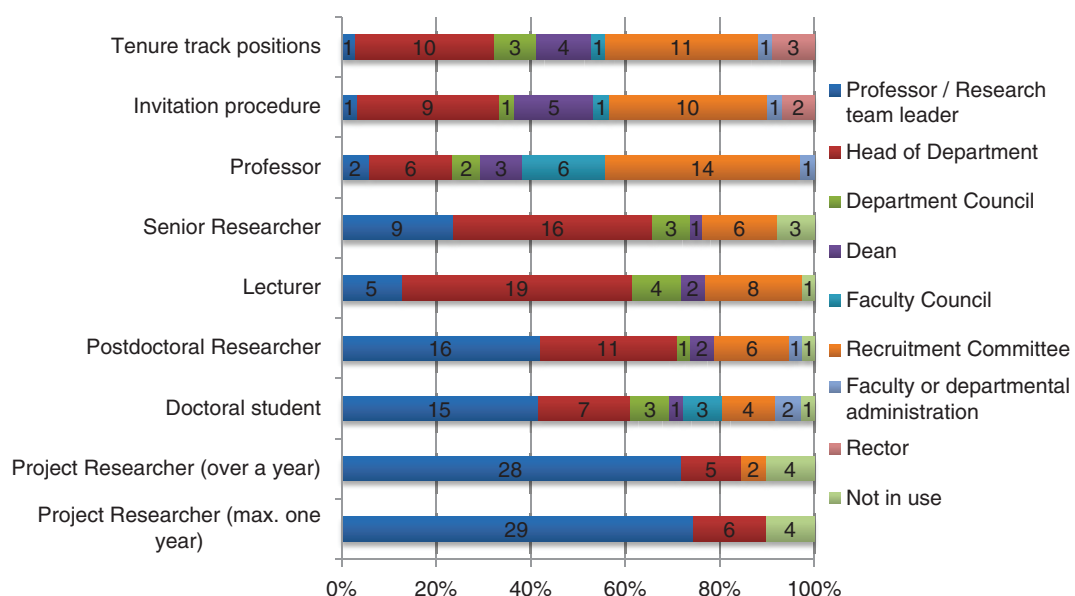

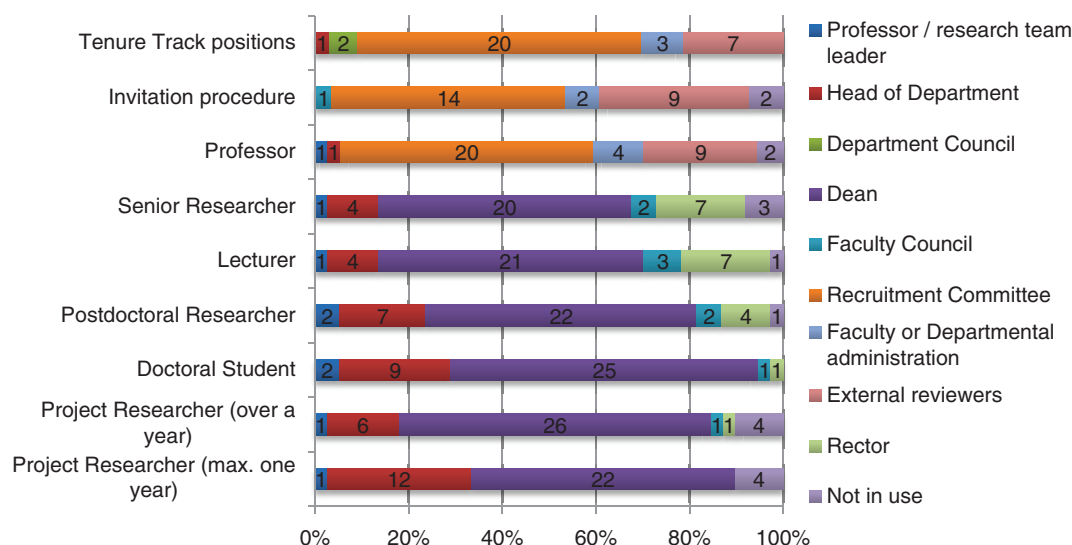*Fig. 2.* Positions or bodies in charge of defining job descriptions (number of cases).

The hierarchy of early and higher career stages can be viewed as having substantial influence in both the definitions of job description and the making of actual recruitment decisions. The same conclusions were also reached by Välimaa (2005); see also Fumasoli & Goastellec, 2015). However, interestingly, in the present study, the recruitment practices can be divided into three groups:

- **Group 1:** professors (including those recruited through invitation) and tenure-track candidates
- **Group 2:** doctoral students, postdoctoral researchers (i.e. qualifying positions), lecturers and senior researchers (i.e. departmental positions)
- **Group 3:** project researchers

These groups of different academic staff also emerged in the statistical data collected for the Evaluation on Four-Stage Career Model project. According to the data on all open positions ($N = 3720$), 29% ($n = 1085$) were permanent, and 71% ($n = 2635$) were for fixed terms. In first and second career stages, most open positions were for fixed terms, while in the third and fourth career stages, most open positions were permanent (Välimaa et al., 2016).

Discussion

It seems that, regardless of policy changes and the implementation of strategic HRM in the management practices of Finnish universities, the stratification of the management of academic workforce is still evident in daily practices, as described by Välimaa (2005); for European universities, see Fumasoli & Goastellec, 2015). However, the empirical evidence shows that there are three, rather than two, stratified groups that are subjected to different HRM measures and consequently have different strategic status.

In Table 3, the findings are presented in the context of strategic HRM recruitment practices. University jobs can be categorised into three distinct groups based on recruitment practices: (1) professors and tenure-track positions; (2) so-called departmental positions (university lecturers and senior researchers) and qualifying positions (postdoctoral researchers and doctoral students); and (3) contingent or precarious positions (project researchers). Recruitment practices vary substantially among these groups. Candidates in the first group are recruited according to professional principles and evaluated by their academic peers. The strategic component is usually the strongest influence in defining positions as recruitment is also a means of profiling universities (Pietilä, 2015). The departmental and qualifying positions are more strictly controlled by organisational strategic steering, and thus, their job description and selection include strategic components. However, the most significant differences can be found between the third group and the other two groups as more informal recruitment practices are applied in the third group. The connection to strategic personnel planning is also weak in the third group as it is considered to be a supportive labour force for strategy implementation, not a group that constructs or implements strategies itself. Whereas the recruitment of the first and second groups can be called *strategic*, the recruitment procedures for the third group are, from the managerial perspective, rather *pathetic*.

Conclusions

Recruitment is an important area for research as it considers organisations' (universities') needs and strategies and individuals' (researchers') motives and personal strategies. Studying recruitment should take into account the role of public authorities, academic disciplines and the

Table 3. Three groups of university staff by recruitment, strategic resources and human resource management.

Group	Job titles	Recruitment practices
Group 1 Professional recruitment	Professorial positions: professors and tenure-track positions	– Open call (excluding those invited) – International recruitment – Definition of job descriptions by recruitment committees, deans, heads of departments – Recruitment decisions by recruitment committees, external reviewers
Group 2 Organisational recruitment	Qualifying positions: doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers Departmental positions: lecturers and senior researchers in the third career stage	– Open-call recruitment – Mostly international in reach – Fixed-term or permanent contracts – Definition of job descriptions by heads of departments, professors, recruitment committees – Recruitment decisions by deans, heads of departments, rectors
Group 3 Unofficial and local recruitment	Externally funded positions: project researchers	– Informal recruitment – Local recruitment – Finding of potential candidates through networks – Fixed-term contracts – Definition of job descriptions by professors – Recruitment decisions by deans, heads of departments

broader labour market context (Fumasoli & Goastellec, 2015). Changes within and outside universities influence their recruitment. For example, state recommendations to the academic career structure (e.g. recommendation of the four-stage career model), increasing demand for international mobility and use of the tenure-track model have changed the HRM strategies and recruitment in Finnish universities. In line with this, interconnections between NPM and HRM, as categorised by Järvalt (2012), can be seen in several dimensions of recruitment processes, including but not limited to a high number of fixed-term contracts in early career stages and greater performance orientation, particularly in the establishment of tenure-track positions.

In this research, we explored the recruitment practices in Finnish universities from the organisational perspective to determine whether the application of different recruitment practices at different career stages has created different groups. We also sought to reveal the potential connections between recruitment and university strategies. Based on the data analysis, we found that recruitment in universities was connected to university strategies, which seemed to be quite consistent and streamlined. There were differences, however, which might be partly related to the different recruitment practices used in the early and higher career stages (reported in Finland by Välimaa, 2005, and in European universities by Fumasoli & Goastellec, 2015); as acknowledged, two-sided, formal and informal recruitment processes existed. From the responses to the survey questions specifically addressed to

faculty-level heads of administration, it can be concluded that different recruitment practices indeed have been applied in different career stages. Based on this observation and the findings in earlier studies (see Kuoppala et al., 2015; Välimaa et al., 2016), we established three groups that differ according to the type of recruitment practices applied to them. These groups also differed in how strongly universities saw them as strategic resources.

Universities' growing autonomy has generated new thinking about how academics can be more managed. Rules and principles for managing academics, including more standardised recruitment processes, have become significant issues in higher education. The age distribution in universities has also influenced the importance of recruitment and will continue to do so in the near future (Musselin, 2010). It is crucial that universities think strategically about their needs and goals, how they should be accomplished and who should be assigned to accomplish them (Baruch, 2013; Shah, 2013).

We would like to emphasise that there are both different groups in academic staff and, at the same time, different kinds of recruitment practices applied. It is important that universities recognise these different groups and stages in academic recruitment and careers, so that they can implement different HRM practices for these groups and think more strategically about the composition of staff. This study provides only a limited picture of the subject; more research is needed to better understand the process and role of different actors in academic recruitment in Finland and abroad.

Acknowledgements

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