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Translating Tenure Track into Swedish: Tensions When Implementing an Academic Career System

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Academic career systems have been in focus lately as a means to attract talented researchers and teachers. In this paper, we compare tenure tracks at three Swedish universities. The analysis relies on qualitative data, including interviews and policy documents, and revolves around three questions: How is the tenure track designed? What were the drivers behind the new tenure track? How is the tenure track designed to handle emerging tensions? We identify three common drivers and rationales: transparency, recruitment of early career researchers and long-term retention of staff. The article ends with a discussion of important considerations that were made when introducing the tenure track. The considerations derive from the tensions between research and teaching, between scope and funding and between the needs of the institution and the rights of the individual. The results are important in an increasingly competitive higher education sector aiming to construct and implement attractive career systems.

Keywords: higher education; tenure track; management; institutionalism; isomorphism

Introduction

In the global competition for reputation and prestige, universities are increasingly under pressure to attract the best students and the best staff (Van Vught 2008). Recruiting and retaining outstanding academic staff is one of the most important means to achieve excellence (Fumasoli, Goastellec, and Kehm 2015). Numerous academic leaders have emphasised the crucial role of faculty recruitment and development in the quality of teaching and research (Cole 2009; Shattock 2010). The introduction of career systems, such as tenure track, is a response to the increased competition for talent and the declining attractiveness of an academic career (Pietilä 2015), which has been in focus in many countries (Bentley et al. 2013).

Lately, there has been a decline in permanent tenured positions for academic staff, such as in the United States (Schuster and Finkelstein 2006). A growing proportion of casual

or temporary staff is now involved in teaching and research across countries. Some of the major European umbrella and policy organisations in higher education have been focusing on human resources as a key issue for universities. The European Commission has launched a number of initiatives such as 'The Human Resources Strategy for Researchers', which includes 'The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers' (European Commission 2005). The code of conduct highlights the importance of open and transparent recruitment. However, despite the importance of having strategies on human resources in place, surprisingly little has been written about this and the relation to tenure track in a higher education context.

The notion of permanent faculty tenure in the United States, from where the tenure-track model originates, is found in the '1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure' (American Association of University Professors 1940). In brief, a tenure track provides a structure for the academic career where higher positions can be reached after evaluation. In this article, a tenure track is defined as the limited probationary period after which an evaluation by peers based on predefined criteria takes place; candidates who fulfil the criteria are offered tenure, that is a permanent academic position at a higher level. Academic tenure has also been closely connected to academic freedom guaranteeing not only job security but also academics' participation in decision making (De George 2003). The introduction of tenure track and its relation to academic freedom has been problematised in the Nordic context (Herbert and Tienari 2013). A recent study by Pietilä (2015) related the implementation of tenure track at two Finnish universities to the development of universities into organisational actors (Krücken and Meier 2006).

Swedish Higher Education and Academic Staff

Before we approach the aim and method of this study, a brief introduction to the Swedish higher education context is necessary. We also identify three tensions in the academic career system in Sweden that will be used as a framework when analysing the material.

Although academic careers are becoming increasingly global, the national context shapes the academic career systems (Finkelstein 2015). The Swedish system provides an interesting case in point regarding strategic human resources due to the latest reforms. The Swedish system has historically been state planned and regulated, but during the past 20 years, it has undergone reforms. One of the aspects resulting from the autonomy reform (Ministry of Education 2009) is the increased room for manoeuvre regarding employment positions and career systems at universities.

Academic staff categories include full professors, senior lecturers, postdoctoral research fellows, lecturers and visiting lecturers. These five positions used to be regulated by the Higher Education Act (SFS 1992: 1434), but as a direct consequence of the autonomy reform, only professors, senior lecturers and the fixed-term 'appointment for merit', which was introduced in 2012, are currently regulated. Apart from these three regulated posts, a wide variety of different appointments are in use at Swedish universities. Table 1 presents the Swedish regulated posts and the equivalent posts in the British and American systems, starting with the entry level, after the postdoc level. The table presents a rough translation and simplification, since positions seldom fully correspond to each other when comparing

Table 1. Translation of academic appointment titles

Position	Swedish title	British title	American title
Early career	Biträdande lektor	Associate senior lecturer	Assistant professor
Mid-career	Lektor	Senior lecturer/Reader	Associate professor
Senior career	Professor	Full professor	Full professor

different universities. Early career positions, including appointment for merit, postdocs and postdoctoral research fellows, constitute 10% of the total academic staff. The biggest group is the senior lecturers at 29%. Lecturers, who mainly teach, make up 18%, and full professors constitute 18% (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2015, 96).

Tensions in a national context

The academic career system in Sweden has been a policy issue for a long time (1955 års Universitetsutredning 1957; Befattningsutredningen 2007; Forskarkarriärutredningen 2016). We have identified three profound tensions in the Swedish academic career system that will serve as a framework when analysing the introduction of tenure track in Sweden. The balance between research and teaching is one of the main points of discussion. In 1957, different career systems were already established for teaching and research personnel, which also reflects the national division between education and research policy. The need for a coherent career system including both teaching and research on all levels was later stressed (Ministry of Education 1997). However, efforts such as appointment for merit have not been widely used. Thus, the first tension in our framework is between research and teaching.

Also in the Swedish higher education policy debate, recent reports have emphasised the crucial role of attractive career systems. The Royal Academy of Sciences presented one such report entitled 'Fostering Breakthrough Research'. The authors identified career systems as the key to successful research. They stated, 'another alarming and well-known drawback of the Swedish system is the lack of career paths and good working conditions for early career researchers at Swedish universities' (Öquist and Benner 2012, 12). The authors claimed that compared with researchers in other countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands and Switzerland, Swedish researchers are, throughout their careers, too dependent on external research funding also to cover their own salaries. The authors recommended the introduction

of fully funded tenure-track positions rather than forcing researchers to raise funds for their own salaries. Thus, the second tension in the academic career system that will be in focus in this article is between funding and scope, that is the proportion of academic staff on the tenure track.

A third tension is identified between the interests of the institution and the interests and rights of the individual. The university needs to recruit talented researchers and retain its staff to attract funding and students. In Sweden, the main part (55%) of income for research comes from external stakeholders, which limits the university's possibilities of setting its own priorities (Swedish Higher Education Authority 2015). As a result, universities use many forms of flexible and temporary employment positions. On the other hand, the university is also an employer with obligations towards its employees. For example, Sweden has national legislation in place that restricts employers from keeping staff too long on temporary contracts. However, it is not only a matter of legal obligation, since stress due to job insecurity might hinder academics' professional development by discouraging risk taking (Nir and Zilberstein-Levy 2006). Hence, the third tension arises between the institution's need for flexibility and the individual who asks for clarity, predictability and a long-term perspective. The three tensions highlighted in this study are presented in Figure 1, which should be read horizontally.
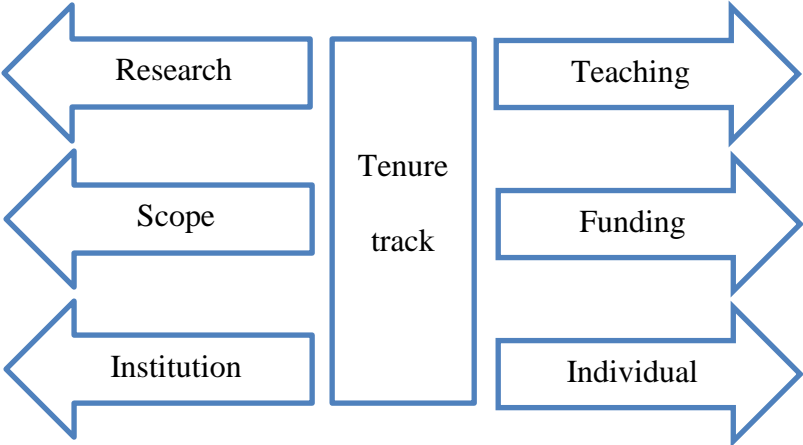

Figure 1. Emerging tensions when introducing a tenure track

These three tensions derive from the national context and need to be considered by all universities introducing a career system. In addition to these three, tensions often arise between the ideals of managerialism and collegiality. This could be portrayed as a profound tension running through the entire Swedish higher education system and other higher education systems. How the ideals of collegiality and managerialism are upheld in local assessment and decision procedures for recruitment and promotion would be an interesting topic for future study. However, this study takes a deliberate strict management perspective.

Aim and Method

In this paper, we analyse and compare three academic career systems at the university[1] level in a national context that has recently been deregulated. The overarching issue discussed here is how universities construct and implement attractive career systems in an increasingly competitive higher education sector. Three questions are asked. First, how is the tenure track designed? Second, what were the rationales and drivers behind the introduction of a new tenure track? The third question departs from the considerations made by the institutional management when introducing a career system: How is the tenure track designed to handle emerging tensions? In answering these three questions, we take a management perspective. This implies that the article presents the management's official view on why to introduce a new career system. We acknowledge that there might be other hidden arguments or drivers that our article will not investigate. Furthermore, the scope of the study does not include whether the tenure track is successfully implemented in practice. Lastly, we are interested in the tenure track as a cohesive entirety and not just in the first steps of recruitment.

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[1] The term 'universities' in this paper also includes university colleges.

The research approach chosen in this paper is qualitative and comparative. More specifically, it is based on a comparative case study design (Yin 2013). We chose three Swedish universities that have recently introduced a tenure track. Today, all universities in Sweden have aspects of career systems, and some have introduced a coherent system. The selected universities have also profiled themselves as frontrunners with regard to strategies for human resource management. They have used their tenure track as part and parcel of a marketing strategy. The three universities were also selected because they work under different conditions. The three cases include one private foundation and two with a state agency status. Two of the cases are single-faculty universities representing different academic fields, and the third case is a multi-faculty comprehensive university. The universities in focus are all research intensive compared with other Swedish universities. The comparative case study approach was chosen because it can shed light on the similarities and differences between universities operating in the same national system.

We collected and analysed written sources regarding the career system at each of the universities. These documents include strategy papers, memos and descriptions on websites. To reach a deeper understanding of what is described in the written sources, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with senior managers at each of the three universities. At the profiled and the small specialised universities, two interviews each were conducted. At the comprehensive university, four interviews were conducted, reflecting the bigger organisation. The eight interviews, conducted in Swedish, were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. NVivo software was used to organise the material.

To answer the first question about how the tenure track is designed, we will present the tenure track with its different steps, the procedures for promotion and the tasks included at each of the three universities. To answer the second question regarding the drivers behind the new tenure track, we will present all drivers pointed out by the university management. To

answer the third question about how the tenure track is designed to handle emerging tensions, we will use the three tensions we have identified in the Swedish academic career system as a point of departure. The material was analysed question by question, and quotes were chosen to highlight how the tensions were manifested and handled at each university.

Theoretical Approach

To analyse the material on drivers for introducing a tenure track, we applied an institutional approach. An institutional approach recognises that internal characteristics are important in understanding how organisations such as universities respond to environmental pressure. It has even been suggested that formal structures of organisations are sometimes adopted only in a ceremonial way (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Institutionalism, or new institutional theory, has provided us with the idea of isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Isomorphism is a process that operates through three mechanisms: coercive, mimetic and normative. Formal and informal pressure from organisations on which one is dependent generates coercive isomorphism. Uncertainty leads to standard responses or so-called mimetic isomorphism, and professionalisation leads to normative isomorphism. DiMaggio and Powell (1983, 152) described the process of mimetic isomorphism as follows: 'Organizations tend to model themselves after similar organizations in their field that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful.' Isomorphism is relevant to this study because it can help us understand why organisations, through change, might become more similar to each other when acting in a competitive market.

To the concept of imitation, Scandinavian scholars have added the importance of modification or translation of ideas during the process of imitation. Czarniawska and Joerges (1996) and Sahlin-Andersson (1996) have shown how travelling ideas are edited to fit local contexts. Sahlin and Wedlin (2008) stressed that imitation is an active process in which

organisations modify ideas to suit their particular situation and needs. When adaptations can go so far as to give a new meaning to an idea or model, the idea has then been *edited*. Hence, the circulation and imitation of ideas might not always lead to homogenisation but instead to variation among organisations (Sahlin and Wedlin 2008).

Thus, an institutional approach can help us understand how internal factors matter when a global idea—in this case, an internationally well-known academic career system, the tenure track—is implemented and how it is adapted to local circumstances.

Three Career Systems

This section will describe the three cases and the design of their recently introduced career systems. To answer the first question about how the tenure track is designed, we will describe the tenure track with its different steps, the procedures for promotion and the tasks at all three universities. Table 2 shows the characteristics of the three universities.

Table 2. Characteristics of the three universities

	Profiled university	**Small specialised university**	**Comprehensive university**
Number of students*	15, 000	1800	20,000
Number of academic staff*	1500	100	1600
Tenure track	Three steps: assistant professor (4 years), associate professor and full professor	Three steps: assistant professor (6 years), associate professor and full professor	Four steps: assistant professor (4 years), senior lecturer, associate professor and full professor
Procedures for promotion	Right to promotion. Predefined evaluation criteria are teaching, research and collaboration with society.	Right to promotion. Predefined evaluation criteria are research, teaching and 'citizenship'	Possibility for promotion. Predefined evaluation criteria include publications, courses and hours of teaching
Tasks	Negotiated individually	50% research, 40% teaching and 10% administration. Can change if receiving external research funds	Some research-intensive contracts at every level supplemented with teaching positions

Source: Swedish Higher Education Authority (2015).

Tenure track

Bearing in mind institutional theory and the concept of imitation, one observation at the outset is that the American tenure track has been inspirational for all three Swedish universities. This is especially true for the profiled university and the small specialised university, where tenure tracks including assistant professor, associate professor and full professor were launched in 2010. The third case, the comprehensive university, has designed a four-step tenure track. Between assistant and full professor, this university has two steps: senior lecturer and associate professor. At this university, the first step of assistant professor also contains two different titles of appointment; the qualifications are the same, but one is permanent employment and the other is temporary. At the profiled university and the comprehensive university, the term as assistant professor is four years, whereas at the small specialised university, it is normally six years. The small specialised university is a private foundation, which means it has been less affected by the recent policy reforms because it was allowed to establish its own employment positions based on its own private funds rather than state funding.

Procedures for promotion

At the profiled university, a successful tenure-track candidate has the right to apply for promotion to a permanent position as associate professor. A half-term evaluation is undertaken after two years. Career support is available, including educational development (15 credits), a mentoring programme and leadership training. For promotion to associate professor and full professor, teaching expertise, research excellence and the ability to collaborate with the surrounding society are evaluated.

At the small specialised university, a half-term evaluation is undertaken after three years on the tenure track. In this evaluation, research, teaching and 'citizenship' are evaluated. Citizenship refers to external and internal engagement. External engagement is understood as,

for instance, taking part in the societal debate. Internal engagement is about participating in boards and steering groups, sharing knowledge with colleagues, and so on. This university has formulated clear and specific criteria for promotion. For example, a particular number of publications in journals of certain rankings are needed. If the criteria are met, then one is promoted.

In the third case, the comprehensive university, a promotion to senior lecturer requires—aside from proven research excellence as shown in publications, conference attendance, etc.—1,700 hours of teaching and 12 credits of educational development courses. The quantitative requirements have been implemented because of the vision of the researching teacher or the teaching researcher. Unlike in the other universities, promotion is a possibility, not a right.

Tasks

The tasks, including the proportion between research and teaching, at the profiled university are negotiated individually and not regulated by a central university agreement. In practice, most assistant professors primarily do research, which typically takes up 70% to 75% of their time. The ratio of tasks at the small specialised university is 50% research, 40% teaching and 10% administration. If external funding is attracted, the proportion of teaching can be decreased in favour of more time for research, but there is a minimum of 20% for teaching in all positions. At the comprehensive university, there is an ideal of the researching teacher with as much research as teaching. However, successful researchers can get contracts more oriented towards research (80%) than teaching (20%). This separation takes place primarily during the term as assistant professor. There are positions at the assistant professor level with generous funding packages, as well as full professorships with excellent conditions. These research-oriented posts are complemented with teaching-only positions at all levels.

Tenure Track as a Response to Increased International Competition

Influenced by institutional theory, we now turn to the second question in this paper regarding the drivers behind introducing a tenure track. A common element in the three universities is that the increased competition for talent in the international market is recognised. For all three cases, competition from other universities within the same field is a point of departure: 'I think it was pretty obvious that we had to provide a better offer to attract good people' (Senior Manager 1, profiled university). Table 3 summarizes the drivers presented by the university management.

Table 3. Summary of drivers

		Profiled university	**Small specialised university**	**Comprehensive university**
Drivers		Recruit early in career	Recruit early in career	Recruit early in career
		Recruit women		
			Upgrade teaching to recruit international students	Upgrade teaching to recruit students
				Focus scarce resources
		Long-term retention of staff	Long-term retention of staff	Long-term retention of staff
		Transparency	Transparency	Transparency

With reference to leading universities in the field, a driver to introduce a tenure track is to recruit early in the career at the assistant professor level. Interviewees argued that this is the best way to recruit international candidates, which is desirable for all three universities in our study. External recruitment, both international and national, has become more emphasised with the introduction of a new career system in all the cases. The focus on early career researchers is rather new and represents a recruitment strategy shift:

There is an old Swedish tradition that if you are to do a very good and careful recruitment, you should recruit a professor … But if you talk to other universities, you realise that even Stanford and so on recruit junior faculty (Senior Manager 1, small specialised university).

For the profiled university, it has been particularly important to promote the recruitment of women to tenure-track positions, since women have been and still are in the minority. Equality between men and women is also discussed at the other two universities; their perspective is that equality is increasing because of the formalisation of recruitment and promotion procedures. However, equality has been a pronounced driver at only one university when introducing the tenure track.

Recruitment of international students is a top priority at the small specialised university. Attracting successful international academic staff is supposed to attract more international students. The vice chancellor stated that one aim of the career system is to place more focus on teaching and 'show that teaching is taken seriously'. The challenge to assess quality in teaching has been discussed at length at this university. A concrete outcome of these discussions is the introduction of a teaching portfolio in which teaching merits can be collected. The comprehensive university also links the introduction of a tenure track to quality in teaching, but its focus is mainly on domestic students. In addition, the profiled university has made efforts to attract more international students, but the link to the introduction of a tenure track is not evident.

One point of departure for the third case, the comprehensive university, is the demographic change. Many academics have reached pension age, which provides a strategic window of opportunity. One of the drivers mentioned in interviews at this university is to concentrate resources on the best researchers; consequently, a few researchers receive the bulk of the funding. A senior manager said,

It all boils down to our awareness of the competition. We really do experience that we must be on our toes because we are a bit younger and a bit poorer in comparison with many others. We are, in a way, situated out here on the plain, and the city is not the world's biggest. We have to do everything we can to attract the staff and students we want (Senior Manager 1, comprehensive university).

The geographic location also implies that great efforts are needed to create a good social situation for the whole family, including employment, childcare and housing.

For all three institutions, external recruitment is part of the rationale. Nevertheless, the long-term retention of staff is also a driver. The introduction of a tenure track based on promotion possibilities is part of providing a more attractive offer. Management at the comprehensive university has experienced losing good researchers to other universities. With this in mind, the university has concluded that it is particularly important, alongside external recruitment, to breed its own talents. By introducing a tenure track with attractive contracts, the university wants to show appreciation for its own researchers.

Transparency has also been a central part of creating a career system for recruitment and promotions. One manager stated, 'Among younger staff, there were maybe also myths flowing around regarding unfair practices in how to advance' (Senior Manager 1, comprehensive university). Transparency as one of the drivers is mainly related to the right of the individual to know what it takes to be recruited and promoted. In the Swedish context, job security is regulated in national legislation, and the universities consider it hard to discard employees. As another manager said, 'In Sweden, you can't throw people out. But you know at least that if I don't meet the requirements, I will not reach the new position. It was not like that before' (Senior Manager 2, small specialised university).

To summarise, the common drivers behind the new tenure track for all three universities are (1) the recruitment of early career researchers, (2) the long-term retention of staff and (3) transparency. Aside from these drivers, the recruitment of more women and

students (both international and domestic) is also highlighted as a reason to implement a tenure track in some of the cases. It should be noted that academic freedom is not presented as a driver in these cases, as it was in the introduction of a tenure track in the American case.

Tensions Considered

Having presented the drivers for introducing a tenure track at the three universities, we will now pay attention to some important considerations made by the institutional management in all three cases. The third and last question to be answered is how the tenure track is designed to handle emerging tensions. The tensions we will discuss are composed of tensions between research and teaching, between scope and funding and between the needs of the institution and the rights of the individual. Attempts to manage these tensions have resulted in modifications and translations of the idea of a tenure track as it was formulated among the American role models.

The ideal of the researching teacher

Interestingly, all three cases share the same vision of the teaching researcher or the researching teacher. Although this vision is articulated as a fundamental principle, there are many tensions between research and teaching in all three cases. The three cases have chosen very different approaches in practice. At the profiled university, the management highlights the difference between departments with a heavy teaching load at the undergraduate level and others with very little teaching but huge resources for research. There are no details on the amount of teaching in the contracts. One of the interviewees was surprised that assistant professors accept that this is negotiated during the employment. While the small specialised university is motivated by the demands of excellent teaching to recruit international students, it still struggles with how to assess its candidates' teaching portfolios. When the management was asked about what the biggest improvements to the system would be, the answer was as

follows:

> The most difficult thing is you would like the faculty to prioritise teaching even more …
> But it is always the research, because that's what you can pinpoint, and historically that is
> what counts. It is an established norm. It becomes problematic when people focus a bit
> too much on research' (Senior Manager 1, small specialised university).

The comprehensive university has formulated a vision of the researching teacher with as much research as teaching. However, in practice, the 50/50 ideal is less common at the individual level. Instead, the comprehensive university has a research track with 80% research and 20% teaching. The university has chosen this path in order to be an attractive employer by providing economic stability for young and successful researchers. The career system is described as strategic, with targeted research funding of those who are identified as productive and innovative researchers.

A tenure track for all?

These three institutions have, as much as possible given the resources, taken steps to develop attractive career systems. For all three institutions, the scope and funding of the career system is a dilemma: how to allocate resources and at the same time promote your institution to be able to recruit the best talents. An important aspect is the proportion of the total staff on the tenure track. Another aspect is the funding of the tenure track. The three universities display a variety of approaches regarding the scope and funding.

The scope, i.e. what proportion of the staff should be on the tenure track, differs significantly across these three institutions. The tenure track is presented as the typical career track for all teachers and researchers in all three cases. However, at the profiled university, the proportion of tenured staff or staff in tenure-track positions is rather small—a minority in many units. This university also has certain training programmes and support exclusively for selected individuals. In addition, there is a large number of academics in other posts, both

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permanent and temporary. These positions, both research oriented and teaching oriented, are off the tenure track with no promotion opportunities. They can thus be regarded as dead ends. At the small specialised university, all new recruitments, apart from a few positions for teachers in supporting subjects, are undertaken through open calls and into a tenure track. There is no parallel career track at this university, and there are very few staff off the tenure track. Finally, the comprehensive university includes most academic staff on the tenure track, albeit with great variations in working conditions.

The three institutions also display a wide variety of funding approaches. The comprehensive university stands out with its concentration of research resources on a group of young elite researchers as well as some highly favourable professor contracts. The management motivates the concentration of resources by referring to the university's relatively small proportion of research funding from the government. At the profiled and small specialised universities, individuals can negotiate their time spent on research versus teaching depending on how much external funds they receive. At the profiled and comprehensive universities, personnel on the tenure track are expected to finance part of their salaries with external funds.

Interests of the institution and rights of the individual

Many of the drivers to introduce a tenure track are related to the interests and needs of the institution. The university, governed by national legislation, needs to recruit successfully to attract funding and position both nationally and internationally. Whereas recruitment of early career researchers is considered a strategic top priority, promotion and recruitment to the further steps of the tenure track are less prioritised. University management seems to see promotion mainly as a right of the individual and not as a strategic tool. There is an awareness of the need to focus more on staff retention: 'We have a poor or no tradition, so to speak, of

taking care of and seeing it as a responsibility for the university to develop the faculty'
(Senior Manager 1, small specialised university).

Transparency as one of the drivers, however, is mainly related to the right of the
individual who asks for clarity and predictability in the career system. A senior manager
stated that one of the main motives to introduce a tenure track with permanent positions is 'to
be a good employer and take responsibility as an employer'. This manager added, 'I belong to
those who don't think hungry wolves hunt best. No, I think you perform best if you have good
terms and conditions' (Senior Manager 2, comprehensive university).

When constructing a solid career system, the desire is for the interests and needs of the
institution and the individual to go hand in hand. A well-performing individual is good for the
university and should therefore be supported. However, the interests and priorities of the
institution might change between the time of recruitment and promotion. Transparency and
predictability are therefore not always desired by the employer. To agree upon a common
career system across the institution can also be challenging, as exemplified by the
comprehensive university, which did not manage to get all faculties to agree on one early
career position. Instead, this university had to include two different positions, namely
permanent and temporary employment.

Concluding Discussion

The aim of this article was to investigate how three universities create and implement
academic career systems in light of more autonomy. European universities are experiencing a
need to strengthen human resource strategies to attract eminent young researchers to an
academic career. The League of European Research Universities (2014, 3) wrote that 'it is
absolutely imperative' to focus on the careers of the most successful early career researchers.
This paper presented three different designs of career systems inspired by the ideas of a tenure

track, the drivers to introduce them and the considerations made by management when implementing a tenure track.

Our study can be described as a snapshot of a recently deregulated system where some universities have profiled themselves as frontrunners in implementing a tenure track. Notwithstanding our intention to investigate the tenure track as a cohesive entirety, the interviews revealed that the focus is on the recruitment of new staff into a tenure track. In the study by Pietilä (2015), the recruitment of excellent junior researchers was also identified as a main goal of introducing a tenure track.

In brief, the introduction of a perceived attractive career system is management's response to external pressures such as increased global and national competition. The concept of isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) is applicable, and the introduction of a tenure track can partly be described as a result of coercive isomorphism or pressure from other organisations. Coercive isomorphism can stem from political pressure such as a new government mandate, but it can also 'be more subtle and less explicit' (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 151). The rationale is that if the top international universities have tenure tracks, then so must we. Deregulation from government has also enabled, but not forced, these universities to act in this matter. In the United States, a discussion about tenure track as both too expensive and preventing mobility has taken form (Growth Analysis 2016). This concern is not raised in the cases under study.

Uncertainty is another force that can also lead to imitation and is applicable in this context, leading to so-called mimetic isomorphism. As described earlier, the autonomy reform (Ministry of Education 2009) enabled Swedish universities to establish their own employment positions and career systems. The profiled and small specialised universities were both inspired by their US role models and adopted a comparable three-step tenure track. All universities, most clearly the profiled and small specialised universities, operate in a global

market competing for the best talents. In this situation, it is important that prospective candidates from all over the world can recognise the career system. The comprehensive university is more nationally oriented, which might have allowed it more creativity and more modification of the model when introducing its four-step tenure track.

The internal characteristics, such as whom you identify as your main competitors, affect what considerations are made and how the idea of the tenure track is translated (Sahlin and Wedlin 2008) to adapt to local circumstances. Such was the case in the negotiations at the comprehensive university, when one faculty could not agree on permanent employment for assistant professors because their main competitors did not have it. An adaptation was made when the idea of tenure track was translated into one that fits the local circumstances. Another modification, or translation, was made by the profiled university when only a small proportion of the staff was included on the tenure track. Likewise, the comprehensive university has great variations in working conditions between individuals on tenure track. Internal factors such as scarce resources and unequal teaching load are pointed out as reasons for these modifications. An interesting point made by Sahlin and Wedlin is how ideas are labelled. The use of 'tenure track' by the interviewees underlines the importance of associating the Swedish career systems to the American role model and the importance of being able to communicate it internationally, although the content is edited and the drivers are not the same.

Academic freedom does not appear as a motive to introduce a tenure track in our cases. During the introduction of a tenure track at Aalto University in Finland, some academics even saw it as a management tool that may restrict freedom (Herbert and Tienari 2013). Neither is tenure track an instrument guaranteeing job security in the Swedish cases. Job security is, as one manager pointed out, regulated in national legislation. Instead, the model of tenure track has been translated into a career system that can provide transparency in decision-making regarding new recruitments and promotions. Despite differences,

management in the three Swedish cases share the original idea formulated by the American Association of University Professors, that tenure is a means to make the academic profession more attractive.

The management in all three cases made some interesting considerations regarding the three tensions. How these tensions are dealt with when translating the idea of tenure track depends on internal characteristics. Two of the universities have clearly motivated their tenure track with the upgrading of teaching experience. The ideal that research and teaching go hand in hand is still perceived, but the introduction of a solid career system highlights the practical difficulties of upholding the ideal (Geschwind and Broström 2015). The second tension involves the scope and funding of the career system. At the comprehensive university, a motive for the career system was to focus resources. The other two universities have constructed a tenure track that is supposed to be inclusive, while the comprehensive university has designated research tracks within its system. Having few positions on the tenure track can lead to exclusivity or elitism, as pointed out by Herbert and Tienari (2013).

Two other drivers that all cases have in common are the retention of staff and the ambition to have a transparent system for recruitment and promotion. These drivers bring us to the third tension between the needs of the institution and the rights of the individual. Based on this study, there seems to be room for a deeper understanding of promotion from the management. Promotion decisions would be interesting material for further research. For instance, how are different tasks assessed for promotion to the further steps of the career ladder? To shed light on another tension running through many universities between the ideals of collegiality and managerialism, future studies could ask where in the organisation and by whom (collegial and/or managerial bodies) decisions on recruitment and promotion are made.

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