

MANAGING ACADEMIC PERSONNEL FLOW AT UNIVERSITIES *

ABSTRACT. Universities experience increasing difficulty in staffing their academic positions. Attracting and retaining highly qualified employees is a general problem that has received much attention in recent HRM literature. But several authors have claimed that the academic career has lost much of its attractiveness. This paper presents seven levers that universities may use to enhance their recruitment and retention power on a difficult job market. Suggestions are made based on experience from innovative organisations, both universities and business organisations. Special attention is given to the creation of multiple and flexible career paths within academia. We contend that a successful application of these suggestions will require major cultural and institutional change at universities.

INTRODUCTION

Universities are communities of researchers and teachers. Their survival and success depends on the capability to attract, develop and retain highly qualified employees. Until a couple of decades ago, an academic career would automatically provide staff members with prestige and would give them the opportunity to work in an exceptionally stimulating intellectual environment. Universities' recruitment policy could be limited to a careful selection of those who applied for a tenured position. As a prototype of a professional bureaucracy (Mintzberg 1983), such a selection process would involve several tests over an extended period of time.

Times are changing, however. A declining demography combined with an explosive growth in the research and knowledge industry has ended the land of plenty. Attracting and retaining highly qualified staff has become an important issue in HRM (Flynn 1994; Chambers et al., 1998; Solomon 1998; Butler & Waldroop 1999; Hiltrop 1999; Cappelli 2000; Van der Dussen 2000; Langan 2000; Naím 2000). Private as well as public employers complain about the difficulties to attract and retain qualified employees. Universities cannot escape this 'war for talent' (Reponen 1994; El-Khawas 1994; Oswald 2000; Stomp 2000; Hardeman 2000). They

* This paper builds further on Gilliot and Overlaet (2001), *Attracting and Retaining Competent and Motivated Academics*, *Reflets et Perspectives de la Vie Economique* 4, 25–39.



experience more and more difficulties in filling vacancies for PhD positions as well as for academic staff (Machin & Oswald 2000; Verhoeven 2000b).

Nowadays, universities are far from the only employers competing for highly qualified employees. One of the reasons is that they have lost their monopoly for knowledge production. In popular fields such as information technology or biotechnology, research now is often conducted in small venture-like companies that provide intellectual challenge, fun and ownership. Large consulting companies have become knowledge centres in fields such as management and business. Traditional businesses, becoming more knowledge intensive, are also competing for those candidates who have academic qualities.

In this tight labour market (Axelrod, Handfield-Jones & Welsh 2001) working at a university is not highly regarded among younger workers (Hardeman 2000). One reason is that young people inflict universities with all the stereotypes they have towards the public sector (Verhoeven 2000a; van den Hombergh 2000). However, there are more fundamental reasons for the perceived unattractiveness of an academic career (Huisman 2000). A large part of academic staff are employed on temporary contracts (Farnham 1999). The number of part-time appointments at universities increases (Sporn 1999). On the one hand the university enjoys more flexibility to react to changes in the environment, student population, importance of disciplines and so on. On the other hand the job security for academics has decreased. The battle for tenure and job security as well as for promotion is fierce. Automatic promotion (as in the past) has become improbable (de Weert 1999). In many cases there are only a limited number of vacancies for permanent positions. Career prospects for academics often seem gloomy.

Another factor that does not enhance the attractiveness of the academic career is a traditional and rigid career structure. The traditional academic recruitment process has always been based on the principle of 'one-strike-out'. The path to tenure was inspired by an 'ideal' type of academic, who spent his/her (whole) working life within universities, focusing on research and teaching, without being diverted by other occupational interests. Any potential candidate who misses one stop in the tenure process, faces the end of his/her academic career.

In this article we discuss how universities can deal with this war for talent, which adds to the turmoil of a rapidly and radically changing environment. We shall not review the challenges of reform, deregulation and accountability, as they are sufficiently elaborated elsewhere (Van Vught & Westerheijden 1993; Clark 1998; Overlaet, Subramanian

& Verdin 1998). We shall focus on the issue of recruitment and the attractiveness of an academic career.¹

We shall demonstrate how universities can create a 'winning employee value proposition' by tailoring the organisation, the job and the incentive package to appeal to talented academics (Chambers et al., 1998). In recognising and meeting the expectations of applicants, universities can be as successful in recruiting and retaining qualified employees as any other employer (Langan 2000). From best practices in industry and from HR theory we shall identify several levers that universities can use to become more attractive. By using innovative recruitment practices and enlarging their recruitment pool, universities can ameliorate their inflow of new staff. By improving the integration of new employees, providing a stimulating work environment, developing a diversified and dynamic career policy and paying attention to the work-life balance, universities can retain academics that are now dropping out. Finally, a proactive management of employee outflow can provide a signalling function to the attractiveness of the university as a temporary employer. As a whole, these levers require a different attitude towards employment and employment terms, one that does not take the interest of the applicants for granted. It also challenges some deeply engrained assumptions on the prototypic academic career.

USE INNOVATIVE RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

Cober (2000) stresses the importance of innovative recruitment practices for public sector organisations to remain competitive. Universities usually rely on traditional channels such as self-initiated job-applications and word-of-mouth recruitment (e.g., from its own students). Their attitude is slowly shifting from passive to active recruiters.

E-recruitment can help to reduce the cost of recruitment, provide an opportunity to better communicate unique organisational capabilities and streamline the selection process through customised online applications. Potential candidates must be able to easily access the website of the universities and the current vacancies allowing them to react immediately by applying for the academic position(s) on-line. Next to publishing the current vacancies on the website of the university, universities can also think of building a common career site like Academic Transfer,² the career site of Dutch universities, academic hospitals and research institutions.

Universities can draw more attention to the opportunities of an academic career and for instance enhance their presence at *career fairs* to attract graduates. These career fairs could be focused on employment in academia, or include business companies, government agencies

or non-profit organisations as well. Academic Transfer and some Dutch universities were for instance present at the Government Career Fair in the Netherlands on 22–23 March 2002.³

ENLARGE THE RECRUITMENT POOL

Because of the rigid academic career structure, universities miss out opportunities to attract and retain potential academics. In this subsection we shall discuss three practices to enlarge the recruitment pool for universities.

The first practice concerns *giving opportunities to start a PhD at a later career stage or at part-time basis*. The traditional PhD student is in an early career stage, in his/her twenties or early thirties, full-time focused on his/her research or dependent on a university (Huisman & Bartelse 2000). In Europe in general, part-time PhD students or students combining their PhD studies with work are rare. However, the interest for starting a PhD at a later stage is clearly present. In Scandinavian countries like Sweden and Finland the average promotion age is about 35 and 36,3 respectively (Kim 2000; Kaipainen, Kivinen & Ahola 2000). Moreover, the work and life experience of the PhD candidate can significantly add value to the quality of the research and the discussions within the research project.

A second practice concerns the *attraction of experts from industry* to teach or give workshops in alignment with their experience in universities and business schools. In professional oriented schools the insertion of experts from industry for teaching purposes is regular practice. Universities should consider how to attract industry researchers for research activities as well.

A third practice is focused on the *re-integration of PhDs in academia*. Many PhDs leave academia after their promotion to go to government or business companies. The possibilities to return to academia after having worked some years outside the university world are small, because universities focus on academic achievements when selecting lecturers or professors. Especially the emphasis on publishing closes the academic profession to outsiders or former academics. For a candidate with several years of experience outside academia it is almost impossible to compete with 'true' academics that have continued to work within the university after their PhD and have built up a scientific research or university teaching record. To re-integrate PhDs in academia, their working experience outside academia should be taken into account and alternative career paths should be created to fit the specific situation of 'former' academics.

IMPROVE EMPLOYEE INTEGRATION

The dropout rate of junior researchers is extremely high. In a recent study in Flanders about 43% of junior researchers leave the university the first two years of their assignment (Moed et al. 2000). In some cases this is due to budget constraints or the conclusion of their research project; others prefer to move on to government, consultancy or industry.

When focusing especially on the situation of women in university, we notice that, although about half of the students and junior academics are female, there is a strongly uneven representation of women in the higher academic positions. This imbalance increases as one moves up the academic ladder (Centrum voor Gelijke Kansenbeleid KU Leuven 2000; Osborn 1998; European Commission 2000). In Europe the proportion of women in a full professorial position ranges from 5 to 17% only (Osborn 1998; European Commission 2000).

The large outflow of junior – and especially female – academics indicate that things go wrong at the beginning of the academic career as well as during later career stages. An academic position combines a high level of autonomy with a high level of expectation and competition. As such, this provides the challenging job that academics are looking for. However, inexperienced researchers may lack the competencies and background to cope with the challenges of the job, thus turning it into a stressful situation. If insufficient coaching is provided, this may lead to an experience of incompetence or isolation (Karasek 1979). Two initiatives can be useful to provide for the necessary coaching and improve the integration of young academics into the university: socialisation or orientation programmes and mentoring schemes.

Socialisation or orientation programmes aim at integrating employees into the company, the job, and the work group (Mondy, Noe & Premeaux 1999). This can help build loyalty from the start and give people a sense of belonging and value (Flynn 1994). A formal orientation programme for future academic staff could help to make them feel familiar with the university and with academic life. Students or academics coming from another faculties or universities deserve special attention. Such an orientation programme could include an introduction to the history and values of the university, the structure and organisation of the university (overview of subjects covered by the university), information about career possibilities for academic staff within universities and so on.

These orientation programmes maybe even more important for junior academics because they are mostly employed on the basis of temporary contracts. An orientation programme could for instance be organised every

year at the start of the academic year, when most of new juniors start their work at the university. In this way the university can create a campus-wide community of research trainees and postdocs (Nerad & Cerny 1999).

Next to general orientation programmes, *mentoring schemes* can be helpful to integrate employees into the organisation and to improve the retention of employees (Maack & Passet 1994; Quinlan 1999). Mentors usually are well informed about the politics, norms, standards, values, ideology and history of the organisation, the skills and competencies necessary for promotion, the paths to advancement and so on (Levinson & Darrow 1979). Mentors can provide individual career guidance and psycho-social support vital to career success (Kram & Isabella 1985). Especially for women in academia, the importance of mentoring schemes has been emphasised (Quinlan 1999).

PROVIDE A STIMULATING WORK ENVIRONMENT

To attract and retain qualified and motivated personnel it is important to provide a work environment that encourages and stimulates communication between supervisors and employees (Kirkland 2000). Universities gain by creating an environment where the researchers find enough time and freedom to go deeply into their research subjects, discuss their research with colleagues interested in the same or related subjects and where the teacher can discuss teaching evaluation methods and the content of their courses.

An important aspect of a challenging work environment deals with *teamwork*. In HRM-literature the pros and cons of teamwork have been discussed extensively (Blake, Mouton & Allen 1987; Parker 1990; Hackman 1991; Stott & Walker 1995; Lembke & Wilson 1996; Auriol, Friebel & Pechlivanos 1999). In this article we shall not discuss the assessment and compensation of teamwork, but rather focus on the motivational aspects of teamwork.

Working and conducting research at a university has traditionally been a rather individualistic activity (Culotta 1993). The race for innovation and recognition can partly explain this individualism. A survey undertaken by Coakes and Sugden (1999) about knowledge management within British universities found that universities do not have the required culture of teamwork and trust which is necessary for knowledge sharing. The academic staff needs to be encouraged to share knowledge and learn from (and with) each other (Ratcliffe-Martin, Coakes & Sugden 2000).

Researchers, especially young researchers, can benefit from working in a team. Communication with others and listening to their thoughts

and visions can improve continuous learning and personal development (Mondy, Noe & Premeaux 1999). Moreover working in teams can make jobs less stressful and give employees a better feeling about their job. Teamwork can also result in higher quality and productivity (Allerton 1996).

A particular feature of teamwork at universities is that different generations can work together within the same research group, on the same research project. Successful teamwork between generations requires a focus on common objectives, the involvement of each member, paying attention to the different training and development needs and helping the team members balance life and work according to their specific needs at that moment.⁴

In many fields researchers recognise that interdisciplinary teamwork is of critical importance to solve increasingly complex problems (Culotta 1993; Massengale 1997). Scientists, more and more, prefer to work in teams because teamwork allows for the division of responsibilities, talents and tasks such as reading the increasingly voluminous scientific literature (Ridley 1991). Research has evolved more and more from an individual task to teamwork. Although teamwork in research is growing in practice, the problem is that it is insufficiently taken into account in the evaluation systems, incentive systems or reward practices within universities. These systems tend to remain too much focused on individual performance and output. It is highly bizarre to observe that fields, in which publications with hundreds of authors is not exceptional, still rely on individual rankings to evaluate research output.

DEVELOP A DIVERSIFIED AND DYNAMIC CAREER POLICY

The core challenge for universities in the 'war for talent' is to adapt the academic career itself to the new expectations of high potentials and to the changing conditions in the labour market. This challenge exceeds a simple cry for more pay or improved promotion prospects. It questions the traditional concept of an academic career itself, which is aptly characterised by the comparison of a university with a male monastery, i.e., a place where men lead a secluded life, devoted to the progress of science (Hesse 1972).

The traditional academic career pattern is very similar at European universities (Huisman & Bartelse 2000). After obtaining a PhD, the academic can be appointed university teacher or lecturer at the university. His or her first concern will be to obtain tenure, i.e., a fixed appointment. Later he can be promoted to associate or full professor. This traditional career development model has become increasingly inappropriate as more

academics pursue several different careers during their working lives (Handy 1995).

In order to be attractive to potential academics universities need to establish *multiple career paths* (Joinson 1997). This implies that universities should systematically provide their academic staff with several distinct career paths and crossover opportunities between them. In this paragraph we elaborate some suggestions on what such multiple career paths can look like.

In discussing career issues, it helps to identify what potential academics want out of a career. Schein's career anchor concept is a way to measure the career orientation of individuals. Eight types of career anchors have been identified in research (Schein 1993, 1996): autonomy, security or stability, technical competence, managerial competence, entrepreneurial creativity, service orientation, pure challenge and work/life balance. People will differ in the extent to which each career anchor is important to them. Employers should try to identify the career orientations of their employees and match them with appropriate career paths. This is an ongoing exercise as the dominant career anchor may change according to successive stages of life. In an early career phase, for example, pure challenge and entrepreneurial creativity can be the dominant career anchors, while at a later life-stage the work/life balance can gain importance.

Mapping career opportunities for academics

Figure 1 presents a first analysis of potential career paths for academics. They are based on several dimensions. The first consists of the three basic tasks within universities, i.e., teaching, research (fundamental and applied) and administrative and managerial responsibilities. This dimension is shown in the first column. As a second input we refer to the three career streams as proposed by Gunz and Jalland (1998) – command-centred, evolutionary and constructional. The *command-centred* career consist of moving from command to successively larger command positions while the core of the job remains more or less the same. Innovation or transformation is essential to the *evolutionary* career logic. 'The organisation evolves and the employee evolves with it.' New knowledge, skills and expertise are acquired and responsibilities are added. *Constructional* careers consist of collecting many diverse experiences, working in different parts of the organisation and in different jobs. While Gunz and Jalland (1998) have referred to the example of a business school to illustrate these career streams, we shall elaborate the case of academics in a more general way.

The third dimension in Figure 1 consists of the career anchor concept. For each career path we added the most dominant career anchor(s), relying

	Command-centered	Evolutionary	Constructional
Teaching	Academic Ranks: Lecturer Senior Lecturer Associate Professor Full Professor	New teaching methods ↑ <i>Autonomy - Creativity</i> Research innovation, exploring new challenging research areas	Share experience to students (business school, executive education) ↑ <i>Service</i> Creating and managing spin-offs, research companies
Research (basic – applied)	Functions: Teaching and/or Research <i>Autonomy</i> <i>Technical competence</i> <i>Security</i>	↑ <i>Autonomy - Creativity</i> Transformation of department, faculty, university	↑ Contractual Research, Research labs (industry, government, university) <i>Technical competence</i> <i>Challenge</i> Management positions within business companies, government
Administration & Management	Managerial career path: Department Head Dean University President <i>Managerial competence</i> <i>Security</i>	↑ <i>Managerial competence</i> – <i>Creativity</i>	↑ Consultancy Physician, Dentist, Surgeon, Lawyer and other professions <i>Service</i> <i>Challenge</i> <i>Technical</i> <i>Competence</i>
Who is responsible?	Designed by university	Other career paths for academics (informal) (=> multiple career ladders)	<i>Managerial competence</i> <i>Challenge</i>
Place of employment	University	– Periphery	– Outside

Figure 1. Academic careers.

on several studies that investigated career anchors in different fields and occupations and on career anchor theory (Applin 1982; Burke 1983; Slabbert 1987; DeLong 1982, 1983; Zerdavis 1982; Custodio 2000).

The traditional career path within academia focuses on teaching and research tasks or on managerial responsibilities. Both paths are *command-centred*: they are based on a progressive mastery of teaching, research and/or managerial tasks, implying a continuous increase in responsibility and command. This increased command can come to expression through promotions from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer or Assistant Professor, to Associate Professor and finally to Full Professor. A managerial career path within academia could include moving from department chair to dean and/or to university president. In both cases, progress can also be made by switching from a small university to a more prestigious university.

Even when these career paths are quite common, in many universities they remain implicit, i.e., the criteria to move up the academic ladder are not well established. For university careers focused on teaching and/or research inspiration may be drawn from the career structure developed at the University of Utrecht, which designed three formal career paths (Universiteit Utrecht 1994). Academics can focus on teaching, research or on a combination of both tasks. For each ladder, four academic ranks are available, providing academics who are more teaching-oriented with similar career opportunities as their colleagues who focus on research.

We associate the traditional academic career with the career anchors autonomy and technical competence. Both correspond to core aspects of the academic profession. In managerial jobs (such as dean or chair) the managerial anchor will be dominant. Overall, the importance of tenure indicates that also the security/stability anchor is relevant.

In an entrepreneurial university (Clark 1998) the traditional career paths may expand into opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship. The career path becomes *evolutionary*. The academic will focus on the development, for example, of new teaching methods, or on the conception of new research areas or research approaches. In the same way the managerial career may focus on organisational change, transforming the department, faculty or institution as a whole.

The evolutionary career path is also represented by those academics who become involved with the creation and management of spin-off companies or new (research) institutes. The number of spin-offs has increased largely and is still increasing. Early in 2001, for example, 172 Belgian spin-off companies could be identified, 67 of which were created during the last 5 years (Clarysse, Heirman & Degroof 2001). By providing support and appropriate structure for spin-offs, universities try to attract

academics working in technology-driven research areas. New research institutes in novel research areas are often set up as a response to developments in the university environment. These also provide opportunities for entrepreneurial staff members. In a teaching context, diversification initiatives may lead to activities such as executive education. In an evolutionary career path the entrepreneurial career anchor is clearly relevant. In some cases, such as executive education, service orientation may also become important.

Within the *constructional* careers we can recognise (1) academics combining their university work with a professional life as a management consultant, physician, dentist, surgeon or lawyer; (2) academics holding management positions outside academia (within business companies or government agencies, for example) and (3) academics focusing on contractual (commercial) research projects for industry, government or university. These academics 'construct' their own careers by collecting diverse experiences within and outside academia, combining theory and practice. Some of them are interested in sharing their experience to students. Others are interested in conducting research in an academic environment. In a discipline like medical science, combining teaching or research within academia with a medical practice at the university hospital is quite common. Other faculties tend to focus on the command-centred careerist and neglect the existence or value of other career paths.

Examining the implications of multiple career paths

When moving from the left to the right in Figure 1 two observations can be made. First, while the command-centred career paths are primarily designed by the university, the constructional careers are more the responsibility of the individual academic. The constructional careerist 'packs his own parachute'. This corresponds to general developments in the labour market which have been documented by several authors (e.g., Handy 1995; Hiltrop 1999).

Second, the different career paths are associated with different locations: from working within the core of the university to the periphery and finally outside the university. This observation refers to the concepts of the expanded developmental periphery and the diversified funding base, identified by Clark (1998) as two of the five common transformation elements that characterise the entrepreneurial university. An innovative university takes the risk of reaching outside the old university boundaries and linking with outside organisations and groups, and diversifies its income streams including third-stream income sources from industrial firms and local governments.

This means that the diversification of career paths risks to lead to an expulsion from the 'academic heartland', i.e., traditional discipline oriented departments. When these departments rejects the entrepreneurial stream that reaches out for the outside world, a constructional or even evolutionary career path will not be appreciated by the core of the faculty. This may have serious negative consequences for the individual who embarks on such an innovative career path. In an entrepreneurial university the academic heartland participates in the innovation and accepts the modified value system (Clark, 1988). In this situation the university needs to consider the implications of the new career possibilities on recruitment, rewarding, promotion and tenure policies. Valuing the non-traditional aspects of multiple career paths and integrating this value in the traditional evaluation processes is essential to make such career paths attractive. Academics who pursue a constructional career, for example, can hardly compete with command-centred academics in terms of publishing. Therefore, alternative promotion and rewarding mechanisms need to be developed to ensure that this type of career will not be subject to discrimination.

In order to allow for flexible crossover – moves between inside and outside careers – experience from industry should be valued in a systematic way. This has its implications for the PhD training. If the university wants to offer the possibility of a career outside academia to PhD graduates, the PhD process should not be too narrowly focused on careers in academia and academic related labour markets. In the early '90s British universities established the 'professional doctorate' where the development of generic skills is included in the PhD training (Baldauf 2000).

Designing flexible career paths

So far we focused on the content level of the academic career. Another way to retain talented academics is by designing *flexible career paths*⁵ (Tucker 1996). On the labour market flexibility has become more important, at the expense of job security, long term career structures and regular promotions. Universities also have to respond to this increasing demand (Vaughan 1995). Academics may desire to work less than full time for a part of their careers. They should have the possibility to do so. Within universities there is already a clear trend towards increased part-time employment of faculty (Sporn 1999).

Universities should also systematically map the various possibilities of flexible employment. Examples of flexible work arrangements are flextime (employees can choose their own working hours within certain limitations), a compressed workweek (employees fulfil their work obligations

in fewer than the typical five-day workweek), job sharing (two part-time people split the duties of one full-time job and are paid according to their contributions), telecommuting (employees remain at home or can stay away from the office and perform their work over data lines tied to a computer), flexible compensation plans (employees can choose from among many alternatives in deciding how their financial compensation will be allocated) and part-time work (Atkinson 1984; De Jonghe & Geurtz 1997; Mondy, Noe & Premeaux 1999; Sels & Van Hootegem 1999). Academics traditionally have enjoyed freedom in deciding where, when and how to organise their work. Parts of the academic's work – like reading and writing books and articles – can perfectly easily be done at home. The practices of flextime and working at home or at the library thus are not that new for universities. Instead, more research has to be done on the practice of job sharing and flexible compensation plans at academia. Again it is essential that universities analyse the implications of flexible careers on recruitment, rewarding, promotion and tenure policies and (for instance) think at how they will evaluate the teaching and research performance of part-timers or job sharers compared to full time academics.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE

An important item of this section concerns the work-life balance. Retention of valued employees can be enhanced by taking a strategic and systemic approach to addressing work/life issues (Lobel, Googins & Bankert 1999). Universities should go further than introducing work/life programmes and policies such as child care, family leave and so on. They should make systematic changes in their organisation to integrate work/life initiatives with core business strategies and to change the organisational culture into a culture that supports those who take advantage of flexible work options.

To integrate work with other aspects of life, employees can benefit from a flexible set of alternative work arrangements. Some examples were given in the previous paragraph. When addressing work and personal life issues, universities should bear in mind that different family forms and values can – and will – be present within the same organisation and that the 'one-size-fits-all' approach will not work (Ivancevich & Gilbert 2000). Instead universities will need to develop flexible work/life strategies to meet diverse employee life style needs.

Universities may claim that they have all kind of arrangements and that there is no reason to be concerned. Academics enjoy a lot of freedom in deciding when, where and how to organise their work. However, the competition for promotion and tenure has become so hard that excel-

lent, ambitious academics experience difficulties in achieving the right balance between work and life. This is often true at the beginning of the academic career because that period often coincides with higher demands in the personal life (starting a family, building a house and so on). Studies in high-tech companies have revealed that the autonomy a highly skilled employee experiences in managing his or her work time, may be completely destroyed by the pressure that is exerted by the organisational context, leading to high levels of stress and resentment (Perlow 1998). Universities could prevent such negative effects by decreasing the competition at the lower academic ranks (lecturer and senior lecturer) through the implementation of a non-competitive promotion process for these ranks, while retaining the free competition for the higher academic ranks (professor and full professor).

ACTIVELY MANAGE EMPLOYEE OUTFLOW

It may look awkward to mention employee outflow as a lever to enhance the attractiveness of an academic career. However, the growth in second and third-stream funding requires universities to hire a larger number of young researchers for which there is no tenure track. Employees in junior positions (thus) will continue to leave the university and may benefit from an active management of this process. Universities may help these academics by providing assistance with their next career step. Just like other employers, some universities have set up career centres where advice is given about how and where to find another job, how to apply for a job and so on. Academics can also get help to discover their strengths and weaknesses, their aspirations and their interests.

Universities may use their network of relations to help their employees to find a new job. They may actively prepare their PhD students to a job in the outside world both by giving them the opportunity to develop relevant competencies and by promoting the importance of a PhD degree on the job market. These efforts will provide a strong signal to young potentials. When they see that academics are cared for from the beginning to the end of their career at the university, they will be more prepared to invest time and effort in starting their career within academia.

CONCLUSION

Universities complain that it is difficult to find sufficiently well qualified staff. Recruitment and retention of academic staff is increasingly problematic and the changes in the European landscape of higher education increases and will continue to increase the exposure to the competitiveness of the academic labour market.

In this paper we presented a series of levers universities can use to enhance their attractiveness as an employer to potential academic staff. These levers were based on the one hand on the HR concept of staffing as managing personnel flow (Beer 1984), on the other hand on best practices from innovative organisations, both universities and business organisations. Some suggestions focus on attracting academics at the early stages of their careers, others aim more at retention of staff members that have already embarked on an academic career path.

The suggestions presented here are no simple recipes to be put into action. On the contrary, they are intended to stimulate reflection within the academic community. In line with Huisman and Bartelse (2000) we claim that the recruitment problem is more fundamental than a lack of tenured positions or the salary level. If universities want to ensure a sufficient influx of high potentials they should make a faculty career more attractive.

An active management of personnel flow defies the traditional passive recruitment attitude of universities that was based on feelings of privileged status and intellectual superiority. It requires a cultural shift towards a more realistic assessment of strengths and weaknesses on the labour market. An active recruitment policy also requires the mobilisation of resources and of management attention, and a professional structure that supports the necessary action.

Our discussion also leads to the conclusion that universities must integrate new career trends such as the constructional career and the work-life balance into the traditional academic career path. This does not only require the adaptation of concepts and practices in terms of training, work arrangements and evaluation processes, but also the integration of these novel opportunities and practices into the very core of the academic heartland. As such the creation of multiple and flexible career paths in academia amounts to a transformation of the institution itself.

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NOTES

1. We shall not elaborate on the difference between the attractiveness of the university as employer and the attractiveness of an academic career as such, since both are related issues.
2. For more information, visit <http://www.academictransfer.nl>
3. For more information, visit <http://www.carrierebeursoverheid.nl>
4. (2000) "How to get Different Generations to Work Together", Manager's Intelligence Report, p. 14.
5. "After Lifetime Employment", Economist, March 16, 1996.

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