

Inhyrningens logik

– konsekvenser för individ och organisation

Hannes Kantelius

AKADEMISK AVHANDLING

För avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i arbetsvetenskap, vid Institutionen för sociologi och arbetsvetenskap som med vederbörligt tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsnämnden vid Göteborgs universitet läggs fram för offentlig granskning.

Fredagen den 15 juni 2012, klockan 13.15, sal 10, universitetsbyggnaden,
Vasaparken

Fakultetsopponent: professor Christina Garsten, Stockholms universitet

Abstract

Title: The logic of using temporary agency workers – Individual and organizational consequences
Language: Swedish with an English summary.
Keywords: Temporary agency work, flexibility, employability, competency development, skill development, working environment, flexicurity.
ISBN: 978-91-979299-3-6

The aim of this thesis is to describe and analyse the consequences of the use of temporary agency work from an individual- and organisational perspective. The thesis is built upon a multidisciplinary theoretical framework including flexibility strategies, the organisation of work, psychosocial working environment, work-based learning, employability and flexicurity. The empirical data comes from qualitative case studies from both work agencies and user firms, encompassing some 65 interviews, and a survey study of white-collar agency workers' perception of security (n=533). Based upon the empirical findings, some contributions are made.

Firstly, *the logic of using temporary agency workers* has been identified. This logic may have profound consequences for both individuals and organisations. For agency workers it may lead to a lack of competence and skill development in their work. This will most likely result in a low perceived employability for agency workers. For user firm employees, a high turnover of agency worker may lead to increased levels of strain at work, if the turnover results in continuous training of newcomers. On an organisational level, the logic of using temporary agency workers has an impact on what potential for flexibility a certain staffing strategy entails.

Secondly, the organisational mechanisms identified explain the risk displacement between the user firm and the work agency, and what actual forms of flexibility a certain staffing strategy entails. The risk displacement is in itself also dependent on whether the user firm is aware of the logic of using temporary agency workers. If not taken into consideration, this logic may instead lead to unforeseen and unwanted states of inflexibility and/or instability. However, when taken into consideration, the logic may become an incentive to the development of the staffing strategy and to organisational learning.

Thirdly, the thesis has shown that the long-term strategic use of agency workers may lead to a user firm achieving a so-called double flexibility, including both numerical and functional flexibility. This strategy and its work organisational outcome may lead to the blurring of the border between core and peripheral workers. Thus, this thesis has also shown that Atkinson's (1984) work still may be useful in understanding the consequences of agency work on both an individual and an organisational level.

Fourthly, the thesis has shown how both temporary work agencies and user firms have a dual responsibility, and likely also dual gains, in providing agency workers with the security dimensions associated with flexicurity. However, employment security, or employability, seems to be the most important aspect of security in today's labour market.

Lastly, the thesis has shown the great impact user firms have on the temporary staffing industry market. The staffing strategies chosen by user firms has a major impact on the working conditions of the agency workers, with the risk of an increased segmentation either between agency workers and other forms of employment, or within the group of temporary agency workers.