

Stable Flexibility – Long-term Strategic Use of Temporary Agency Workers in Sweden

Kristina Håkansson, Tommy Isidorsson,
Hannes Kantelius

The use of temporary agency workers is closely linked to the concept of numerical flexibility, entailing a need for additional staff in booms. However, previous research has also revealed a trend towards a more extensive and constant use of temporary agency workers. Even though the long-term use is not new, there is hardly any knowledge of how this transfer from short- to long-term use takes place. In this article, the exchange process between the temporary work agency and the user firm is scrutinised to explore and explain how the use of blue-collar temporary agency workers has become a long-term strategic use of the user firm's staffing strategy.

Key words: agency work, flexibility, flexible organization, labour market flexibility, staffing strategy, temporary agency workers, temporary work agency

1. Introduction

The use of temporary agency workers is closely linked to the concept of numerical flexibility, entailing a need for additional staff in booms. According to the image of 'The flexible firm' (Atkinson, 1984) numerical flexibility entails a continuous change in the number of staff to exactly match the number of staff to the number needed. This "exactly matching" implies short term changes in the number of staff. However, previous research reveals