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The Character of the Tenure Track Professor Recruits at Aalto University

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Abstract

Aalto University’s tenure track career system offers a well-supported career path for professor-level academics. Since 2010, Aalto University has recruited over 300 professors on the tenure track. Bibliometric analyses have been an integrated part of Aalto University recruiting processes since 2011. The research question in this case study is to analyse to which extent do the bibliometric indicators explain the choice of the recruited professor. The analysis indicates that Aalto University has recruited young, talented and highly cited researchers to the tenure track positions. The recruited professors are slightly at the earlier phases of their scientific career.

Methods and Materials

The analysis is based on 33 tenure track positions. The total amount of applicants 1159 is split into eight key research areas.

The bibliometric analyses are based on Web of Science and Scopus databases and on Google Scholar as well. The journal rankings have also been utilized. These sources are commonly used in academic institutes e.g. Gorraiz & Gumpenberger (2015). The data have been processed using analytical tools: SPSS, Power BI, RStudio, and Python.

In the publication analysis the commonly used bibliometric indicators are used and the overall methodology follows the policies highlighted e.g. in the Leiden Manifesto and the Acumen Portfolio.

Introduction

Established in 2010, Aalto University is a new university with centuries of experience. It was created from the merger of three Finnish universities and today it consists of six schools with nearly 20,000 students and 4,700 employees, 390 of which are professors. Aalto University’s research is concentrated around key areas combining four core competences in the fields of ICT, materials, arts, and design together with three grand challenges related to energy, living environment, and health & wellbeing.

The university’s ability in attracting and retaining the best professors is a key success element (Abramo, D’Angelo & Rosati, 2016). Since 2010, Aalto University has recruited over 300 professors on the tenure track.

The research question in this analysis is: To which extent do the bibliometric indicators explain the choice of the recruited professor?

Results

The analysis indicates that Aalto University has recruited young, talented and highly cited researchers to the tenure track positions. The recruited professors are slightly at the earlier phases of their scientific career compared to the not-recruited applicants in most key research areas (Figure 1). The career length is estimated by substracting the year of the first publication in respective database from the year of the application. The method can be used as an approximation of career length according to the results by Nane, Larivière & Costas (2017).

The publications of the recruited professors have received more citations in the different databases than the publications of the not-recruited applicants in nearly all key research areas (Figure 2). On the contrary, the number of publications per year doesn’t differ significantly among the recruited and not-recruited.

Conclusions

In some key research areas, the level of journals in which the applicants have managed to publish their articles, has been evaluated using different journal rankings. Here the results showcase that the recruited have published in more prestigious journals than not-recruited. The results can be interpreted that the same productivity has generated more attention in the scientific community among the recruited professors compared to not-recruited. (Kolesnikov, Fukumoto & Boxeman, 2018)

The statistically significant difference between the amount of citations among recruited and not-recruited indicates that the bibliometric analyses conducted during the years have brought valuable information to the recruiting process.

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