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**Abstract**

This paper sets out findings from research that considered the interplay between English national policy developments in human resources management in higher education and the personal stories of academic staff as career participants. Academic careers are pursued in an institutional and national policy context but it was not clear that the formal management agenda coincided with the real concerns of the objects of these policy initiatives, academic staff themselves. Twenty-one academic participants, across six case study sites, were interviewed. Significantly, the research found that the policy issues that dominate the national and institutional human resource management discourse such as pay and conditions of service, bargaining structures, tenure and competitiveness are not the same as those issues that academics raise. The research highlights a found disjuncture between the national human resources policy discourse and the social reality of academic staff as objects of that policy and suggests changes as a result. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)