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**Abstract**

Many higher education institutions (HEIs) seek to attract international students through marketing and recruitment activity. At the same time, HEIs are developing strategic plans that suggest internationalisation strategies such as the recruitment of students are an important consideration for their institutions and these strategies and implementation differ by their individual settings and culture. This study uses an international comparison of three universities to explore how HEIs' strategic plans shape or mediate international student recruitment practice within higher education. The activity theory is used to compare institutional strategies as an activity by considering how practitioners in different parts of the world shape the meaning, outcome and tensions of their practice. Using this approach, the study examines international student recruitment at three HEIs in Canada, Hong Kong and the UK and shows how practitioners of international student recruitment are influenced by their institutional strategic plans, and the extent of this influence on practice is mediated by institutional culture and the practitioner's position within the institutional hierarchy. The study

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results indicate that considering strategy practitioners' perceptions and interpretations of strategic plans provides HEIs with additional resources to improve strategic planning processes by creating and designing plans that address practice implementation within institutions. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)