

An Employer of My Liking

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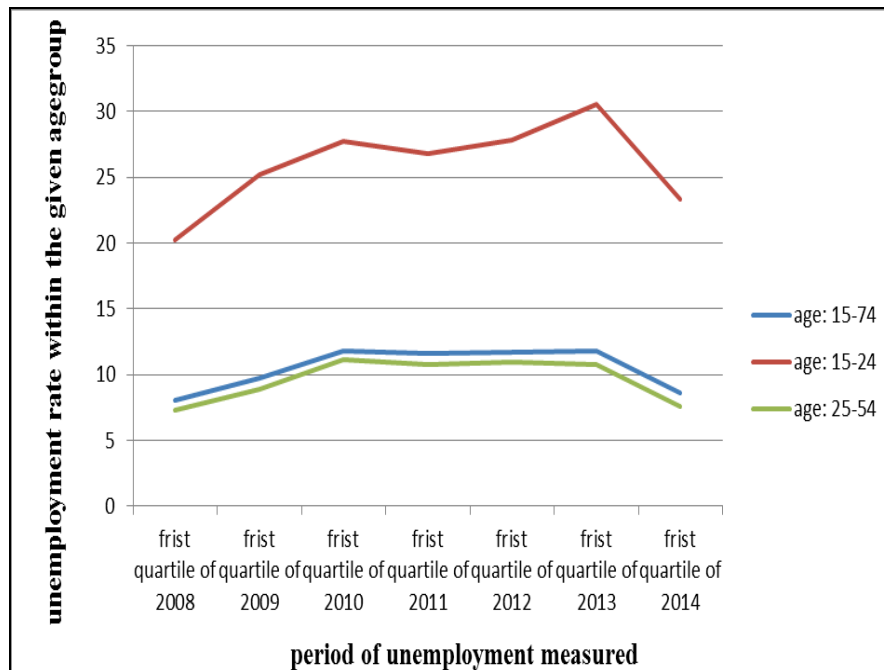
Abstract: The unemployment rate in Hungary is relatively high compared to that of the Western European countries. This means, the labour market is demand driven, and job applicants are happy if they get a job, and do not usually have a real choice. However, when already employed, the previously (most of the time) implicit expectations surface, and the outcome is either motivation and commitment, or demotivation and truancy. Present paper endeavours to identify the motivators of students in tertiary education and reveal their hidden expectations.

Keywords: expectation, motivation, employment, commitment

1 Introduction

Owing to the past years' crisis the unemployment rate has shown an increasing tendency (Csiszárík-Kocsir et.al, 2012), however, the correction has already started in Hungary. According to the official statistics, of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH, 2014) the number of registered job seekers has decreased significantly in the past months, and with 379 000 people in March 2014 it is 8.6% in average, for females - as for decades now - still comparatively higher (8.8%) (Nagy et al., 2010), and for males relatively low(er) 8.4%.

The relative unemployment rate is the lowest within the age group 55–64 (6.6%). Those between 25 and 54 face an average unemployment rate of 7.6%. However, the youngest generation on the labour market (15-24), has it very hard. The average rate of registered job seekers within the age group is 23.3%, meaning that almost every fourth young labour market entrant cannot find a suitable job. This age groups contributes to the total amount of unemployed with 19.7%, which, - taking into account, that many of the representatives of this age cluster are still full time students and are not applying for any job, - is an enormous number. So the labour market situation for young adults, graduating from tertiary education is dire (Marosi, Bencsik, 2008; Bencsik et al, 2009; Toth-Bordasne Marosi et al. 2010). The change of the ratio of unemployed people within a given age-group in the past seven years is illustrated on Graph 1.

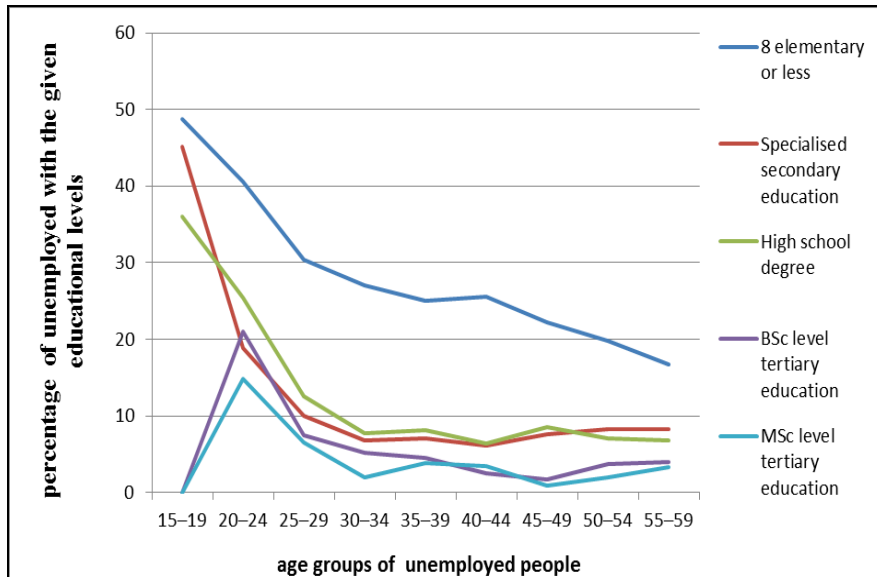


Graph 1
 The change in the unemployment ratio over the past seven years by age-groups
 Source: KSH 2014

In the first quartile of 2014 more than half of the registered job seekers (52.1%) has been seeking a job for over a year, and the average duration of unemployment in Hungary is 18.9 months. In face of these numbers, most job seekers, and especially those of the youngest age group, are happy to get a(ny) job. The labour market for them is not about finding a suitable job, or picking the most favourable offer, but often about working almost anything in order to be able to support, or provide for themselves.

Although the situation of those with tertiary education is slightly better than that of job-seekers with lesser education, the situation is still alarming. (For further details see graph 2.)

As represented in Graph 2. fresh university graduates face a dire labour market situation. Between the age of 20 and 24 (usual period of finishing BSc and Msc level studies) every fifth of them is unable to find employment. What is more, the number of those, willingly undertaking jobs that do not require the educational level and competency set of the freshly graduated is not even indicated in the graph.



Graph 2

The distribution of unemployed with various educational levels within age groups

Source: KSH (2011)

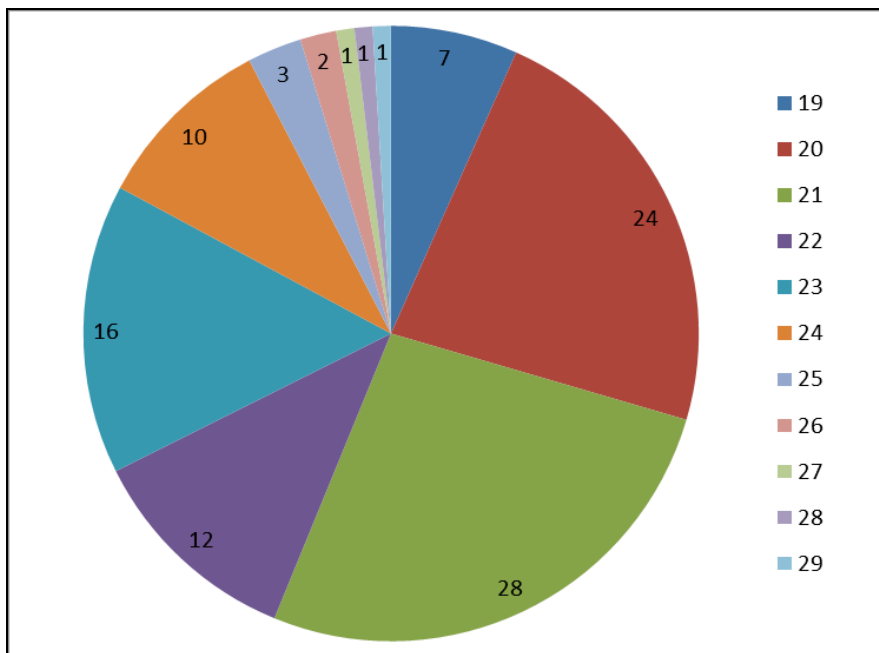
Consequently, most fresh graduates are willing to apply for and occupy positions that are not completely suitable for their knowledge and educational level (Lazányi, 2013), and most possibly are not entirely according to their preferences or liking. However, this initial motivation, - the “doesn’t matter what, I’ll take it’ mentality, - disappears after a while, and employees have to face the reality of working for an organisation in a position with tasks that do not always match their implicit (and sometimes not even their explicit) expectations.

Present paper endeavours to explore the employment motivation of those in tertiary education to identify principles that shape the organisational behaviour of those already employed.

2 Research method and participants

The expectations of students in tertiary education have been explored through an online questionnaire that has been advertised among the students of Óbuda University. The participation was anonym and voluntary.

In March 2014, 105 students have filled out the online questionnaire. Among them 55 male and 50 female, that - according to the average male/female ratio of the students at Óbuda University – can be regarded representative. Research findings indicate that economic behaviour of men and women is different (Szekeres, 2010). Thus we can suppose that the expectations of the students would also differ if the responses were grouped by gender. The distribution of the respondents on the basis of their age is displayed on Graph 3.

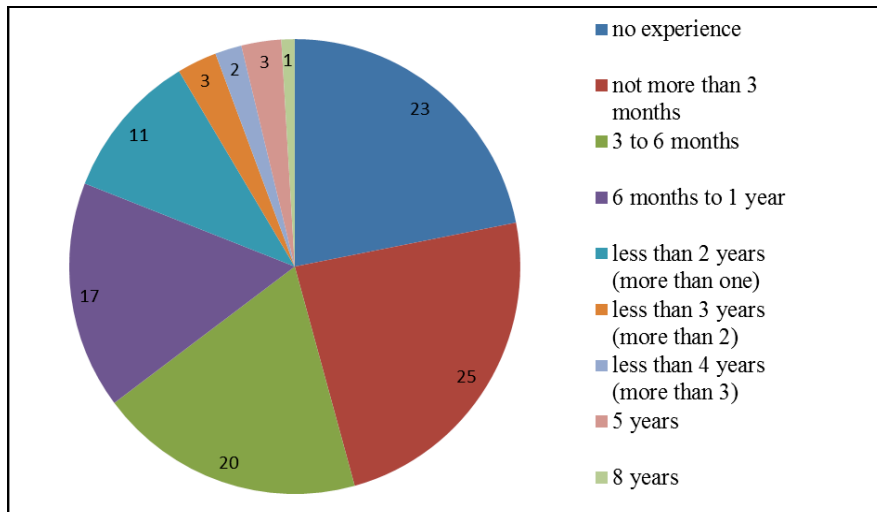


Graph 3
 The distribution of the respondents by their age

As it can be seen on Graph 3, the majority of the respondents (94%) is in the most endangered age group, where the average unemployment rate of those with tertiary education is around 20%. Luckily, as it is displayed on Graph 4, most of them already have some work experience. Owing to the very nature of the tuition at Óbuda University, there can be no student with a degree who has no work experience by the end of his/her studies. However, the compulsory duration of traineeship, or work experience is no longer than 3 months.

As it can be seen on Graph 4 23% of the respondents have no work experience, and another 25% only has the necessary experience in order to receive their degree, not more than that. On the basis of the work experience, I distributed the participants into 3 groups: 1 – no work experience, 2- only necessary (for graduation) experience, 3 – real work experience. Unfortunately the research did

not inquire about the work done, and position occupied in any detail, so there is no information on whether the positions of the students with more than the necessary 3 months really do provide “real” (relevant) experience.



Garaph 4
The distribution of the respondents by their work experience

The questionnaire - besides the basic descriptive demographic questions - consisted of three different blocks (20 questions each). In the first block, students were asked to rate 20 features (motivators) on the basis of which they would like to select their future employer from 0 – not at all important, to 5 – very important. The second block requested them to rate the very same features on the same scale from an average employee’s point of view. In the third block, they had to select the five most important features upon which organisations should focus their efforts in order to retain their employees.

With these three blocks I intended to investigate:

- 1, whether the participants think themselves different from the average employees
- 2, whether the suggested focus for the companies match their, or the supposedly average employees’ preferences

3 Results

The respondents’ opinions on the 20 features that they had to evaluate are displayed in Table 1. ‘Own’ signifies the tested features’ ranking according to the

respondent's opinion, 'Average' implies the perceived average opinion and 'Proposed' stands for the proposed target of organisational development.

	Own		Average		Proposed	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
salary/benefits	4,49	1	4,31	1	3,77	2
operation of a career/talent management system	4,24	2	4,11	2	3,36	4
work/life balance	4,16	3	2,96	15	3,32	5
opportunities for development	4,10	4	3,49	3	3,18	8
recognition/respect	3,90	5	3,45	4	3,95	1
co-workers, work atmosphere	3,79	6	3,17	10	3,24	7
work schedule (telework part-time, flexible)	3,71	7	3,18	9	2,99	11
geographical location/accessibility of the workplace	3,68	8	3,22	8	2,66	18
personality of the leader/ management style	3,62	9	3,14	11	3,43	3
work circumstances (e.g. office environment)	3,57	10	2,90	17	3,31	6
characteristics of the work task	3,55	12	3,11	12	2,86	12
potential for applicability of the knowledge acquired during studies	3,55	11	3,34	6	2,73	14
career opportunities	3,52	14	3,38	5	3,05	9
autonomy/power	3,52	13	2,91	16	2,70	15
prestige of the position	3,50	15	3,00	14	2,62	19
possibility of involvement in projects	3,26	16	2,89	18	2,67	16
market position of the company	3,21	17	3,06	13	2,82	13
company's reputation	3,07	18	3,24	7	3,02	10
opportunity to work abroad, or with foreigners	2,73	19	2,89	19	2,57	20
Corporate Social Responsibility	2,70	20	2,50	20	2,66	17

Table 1

The importance of the tested features and their ranking according to the respondent's opinion, the perceived average opinion, and the proposed target of organisational development

The respondents valued the salary and benefits provided by the (potential) employer the highest, even higher than they think an average job-seeker would.

They also put special emphasis on having a career/talent management system at the company, the chance for a balanced work and private life, and opportunities for personal development along with recognition and respect. These five factors mostly cover the whole Maslow pyramid. The only missing level, relatedness, is added by the sixth most important feature, namely the issue of co-workers and work atmosphere.

The participants of the research proposed the companies to concentrate their efforts on providing their employees with an adequate level of recognition/respect and salary/benefits, to employ leaders with a decent personality and an appropriate management style, to operate a career and/or talent management system and help their employees to establish and maintain a healthy work/life balance.

According to the data displayed in Table 1, respondents think that they value work/life balance, the relations with co-workers and the work atmosphere along with the work circumstances more than the average job seekers would. On the other hand they think they care relatively (on the basis of the rankings) less for the company's reputation, the career opportunities and the potential for applicability of the knowledge acquired during their studies than other young labour market entrants would.

In order to be able to compare the respondents own opinions with that what they think to be the average selection criteria when deciding on a company not only on an average relative (ranking) basis, I created threefold differences from each respondents' answers.

In order to determine, whether they perceive their opinion on the features of a potential employer to be different from that of the average employee's, I created the difference of the scores given to each feature (own-average). In order to be able to answer the second research question I created the difference of the scores that the respondents gave to a distinct feature on relevance and that of the proposed focuses of the companies (own-proposed). I also had to create the very same difference for the average scores and the proposed focuses of the companies (average-proposed). The so created differences' means are displayed in Table 2.

The differences that have been created in the above described manner provide a more accurate understanding of the dissimilarities. According to research data, many students value the work/life balance, the work circumstances, the co-workers and the work atmosphere, the opportunities for development, the autonomy/power in the position in absolute numbers significantly higher than they think the average job-seekers would.

On the other hand, the company's reputation, and the opportunities to work abroad, or with foreigners were valued even lower than they think it is perceived by the average. Accordingly, the opportunity to work abroad, or with foreigners was the least recommended feature an employer should work on to increase employee satisfaction (compare the values in Table1 and 2).

	Own - Average		Own - Proposed		Average - Proposed	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
career opportunities	0,08	1,41	0,75	1,92	0,88	1,78
potential for applicability of the knowledge acquired during studies	0,18	1,85	0,61	2,18	0,82	1,90
geographical location/accessibility of the workplace	0,43	1,68	0,56	1,99	1,02	1,99
salary/benefits	0,14	1,12	0,54	1,74	0,71	1,49
prestige of the position	0,47	1,46	0,38	1,91	0,89	1,71
operation of a career/talent management system	0,10	1,82	0,33	2,08	0,48	1,76
opportunity to work abroad, or with foreigners	-0,20	2,18	0,31	1,71	0,16	2,07
opportunities for development	0,57	1,62	0,30	2,00	0,92	1,86
characteristics of the work task	0,42	1,55	0,26	2,05	0,70	1,93
market position of the company	0,11	1,77	0,24	2,22	0,38	2,01
possibility of involvement in projects	0,32	1,84	0,22	1,88	0,59	1,95
company's reputation	-0,21	1,67	0,22	2,12	0,05	2,06
autonomy/power	0,57	1,49	0,21	1,80	0,82	1,81
work schedule (telework part-time, flexible)	0,50	1,59	0,19	2,21	0,72	2,10
recognition/respect	0,45	1,51	-0,03	1,85	-0,51	1,83
co-workers, work atmosphere	0,58	1,61	-0,07	2,26	0,55	2,15
Corporate Social Responsibility	0,19	1,80	-0,15	2,21	0,05	2,00
personality of the leader/ management style	0,45	1,68	-0,29	2,28	0,19	1,99
work/life balance	1,16	1,88	-0,37	2,10	0,88	1,84
work circumstances (e.g. office environment)	0,65	1,57	-0,42	2,12	0,26	1,99

Table 2

Means of differences generated on an individual basis for Own, Average and Proposed preferences

Interestingly, the participants of the research proposed for employers to put even more emphasis on improving the work circumstances (e.g. office environment), on aiding the creation of a healthy work/life balance, or on taking Corporate Social Responsibility seriously than they themselves found these features in an employer appealing. Naturally the personality of the leader and his/her management style,

the co-workers and the work atmosphere, along with the recognition/respect provided to the employees also received special attention.

Conclusions

On the basis of the opinion of 105 students of Óbuda University we can conclude, that there are many expectations (either explicit or implicit) in young employees. Although the salary and other remunerations are the most important factors in choosing a company, if the question is phrased, what is necessary to keep an employee, various other factors occur. The respondents also put special emphasis on having a career/talent management system at the company, the chance for a balanced work and private life, and opportunities for personal development along with recognition and respect and good relations with co-workers and a pleasant work atmosphere.

They proposed the companies to concentrate their efforts on providing their employees with an adequate level of recognition/respect and salary/benefits, to employ leaders with a decent personality and an appropriate management style, to operate a career and/or talent management system and help their employees to establish and maintain a healthy work/life balance. However improving the work circumstances (e.g. office environment), and aiding the creation of a healthy work/life balance, or taking Corporate Social Responsibility seriously was also accentuated.

To sum it up, young labour market entrants have their own, very definite opinion of what a good employer is like, and what they would like to get, experience when employed. Owing to the dire labour market situation they are not (always) able to act upon their own judgement, when applying for a job or accepting a position. However, the expectations linger, and if not satisfied, might breed demotivation and truancy or even burnout. The fulfilled expectations on the other hand generate motivation and commitment and lead to personal as well as organisational prosperity.

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